(W30) NEWLY DIAGNOSED MS DINNER SERIES AT VIRGINIA MASON MEDICAL CENTER
L.A. Webb, P. Paul, M. Kita
Neurology, Virginia Mason Medical Center, Seattle, WA

Background: At the Neurosciences Institute at Virginia Mason Medical Center, approximately 173 new patients were diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2009. To help these individuals and their families better understand their disease, we designed the model for the Newly Diagnosed MS Dinner Series. Based on our experience with newly diagnosed multiple sclerosis (MS) patients, we have found that several key topics are important as patients begin to learn about their disease. These topics were planned carefully to be covered during five different sessions as follows: 1) Basic MS Pathophysiology; 2) Understanding Your MRI; 3) Symptom Management and DMT review; 4) Complementary Medicine; 5) Community Resources & What It’s Like to Live with MS. Our speakers include Dr. Mariko Kita, an MS neurologist; Piper Paul, RN, MSCN, a certified MS nurse; Laurie Mischley, ND, a naturopath; and Lisa A. Webb, LICSW, an MS social worker. The series is held on five consecutive Monday evenings for 2 hours, every other month. Dinner is provided from an unrestricted educational grant that covers the meal and parking. Patients are encouraged to bring family members or support partners to the program. During any given series we have between 4 and 24 participants. A new MS diagnosis can be overwhelming, and patients process their diagnosis emotionally and intellectually in different ways. In using this educational model, we provide a structured format over 5 weeks to help patients and their families learn about MS in a comfortable and therapeutic environment. We engage an evolving dialogue and provide a consistent presence during this critical time in their initial experience of their diagnosis. The series also offers the participants an important opportunity to meet other newly diagnosed patients in a setting that is validating to them. At the end of the series some participants have continued to stay in contact with one another. We have offered the program since summer 2007 and have presented over 60 dinners. A sequel for graduates of the series is also offered (“What’s Next”), and we continue to make changes to our program based on feedback. In 2010 we will offer participation in the series via live webcast and also a full-day session where all lectures are given on one day, for patients who live too far away.

Disclosure: Nothing to disclose