(W31) EVOLUTION OF THE MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS SOCIAL WORK COLLABORATIVE OF WASHINGTON (MSSWCW)
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Background: Social workers are key members of the interdisciplinary multiple sclerosis (MS) specialty care team. They address the psychosocial and long-term-care needs specific to the MS community in ways that transcend what is typically available in a general clinical setting. The Seattle area has become a hub of MS specialists providing health care to individuals with MS living in Washington, Alaska, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana. In 2009, in an effort to improve the MS care network and clarify the role of the MS social worker, a group of social workers and other allied health professionals from Washington State collaborated and developed the first MS social work organization in our region, the Multiple Sclerosis Social Work Collaborative of Washington (MSSWCW). The MSSWCW is currently developing a formal network of MS social workers, developing best practices for MS social workers, and developing a forum for professional training and resources to serve the MS community. The group has recently elected its first officers and adopted the following mission and vision statements. Mission: To create a consortium where social workers in the MS community can consult, collaborate, educate, and support one another as a catalyst for greater service to, and advocacy for, the MS community. Vision: By studying research trends and participating in MS-related program development, the consortium will work toward the professionalization of MS social workers by: 1) improving clinical skills through ongoing professional training; 2) increasing social workers’ capacity to provide the highest standard of holistic care; 3) providing psychosocial education to people living with MS and their families, friends, and caregivers.

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