



May 23, 2016

## MS not stopping Sarah

Sarah Benney had just given birth to her second child James and was only 30 years old when she was diagnosed with relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis. Her first symptoms were the loss of peripheral vision in her left eye and fatigue.

“It couldn’t have come at a worse time. My two-year-old daughter Maddie, had been in and out of the hospital due to her asthma and allergies. My first thought was that I would end up in a wheelchair. I had heard about MS through their Readathons that I took part in as a child, but I didn’t know much about the condition itself,” said Sarah.

“What I learnt was that with MS, you can never be sure of what’s coming next. You don’t necessarily know what you’re dealing with short-term or long-term, you have to make considerable changes to your life, and some days are better than others. While MS is part of me, it doesn’t define me.”

As a single mother, Sarah said one of her major concerns was how she would be able to manage raising her two children while dealing with the symptoms of her MS. But she soon realised that it was important to prioritise her health, because she couldn’t look after her children if she wasn’t well.

Sarah said that these days, fatigue remains her biggest challenge, which for many years meant she had to stop playing tennis, a sport she loved.

“It’s been 15 years since my diagnosis and I’ve accepted that there are going to be some things I can’t change or control. I simply do everything I can when I’m well and am realistic when I’m not feeling a 100 per cent. I am so lucky to have a mother and family who are there to help,” added Sarah.

“In the years since I’ve been diagnosed, medications have changed significantly and have allowed me to live a better life and be the mother I always wanted to be. I’ve also been able to return to playing tennis again. The physical activity, being active and out and about has been fantastic.”

World MS Day is on Wednesday May 25. The Multiple Sclerosis Society of WA (MSWA) is holding a series of events to raise awareness about the neurological condition, which affects three times as many women than men.

“MSWA were a huge source of support when I was first diagnosed. I joined a peer support group and knowing I always had access to nurses or other support staff to answer questions about my medication, or any other matters was very comforting,” Sarah said.

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“World MS Day is a great way of bringing everyone together for a great cause. Last year, MSWA contributed \$1.5 million to MS research nationally with \$500,000 of that set aside to fund West Australian researchers,” said MSWA CEO, Marcus Stafford said

“We don’t have the medication to completely stop MS yet but we have ones to slow its progression, so every piece of research undertaken is very important. It is thanks to the generosity of the people of Western Australia that we can commit ourselves to meeting the needs of our Members in Perth and building them a brighter future.”

**-ends-**

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**Some facts about MS:**

- MS is the most common neurologically degenerative condition diagnosed in young people aged 20-40.
- MS affects woman more than men (3:1).
- The most common type of MS is relapsing remitting MS.
- The most common symptoms of MS are hidden (fatigue, balance, depression, bladder disturbance, sensory visual).
- There is no cure for MS yet - BUT we are working on it!

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