TYPES OF MS

There are four main types of MS. However it is often not clear what type someone has if for example, they are newly diagnosed. The effects of MS can vary hugely from person to person. The four main types are listed below, but do bear in mind the broadness of each one.

1. Benign

This could simply be an initial attack that leads to a diagnosis of MS with no further activity. However, this does not mean it will always be completely inactive. It can also be associated with occasional relapses over a period of time, followed by a complete recovery. In some cases benign MS may worsen in later life.

2. Relapsing/Remitting

Majority of people diagnosed with MS are diagnosed with Relapsing/ Remitting. MS is active during a relapse and nerves are damaged; new symptoms may appear or existing ones worsen. A relapse can last anything from a few days to several months. The severity can also vary from mild to more severe. Symptoms will still be there because of damage done to the nerves. When in remission, the activity quietens down; this can last any length of time, sometimes even years.

3. Secondary Progressive

People with this type of MS may have started with a diagnosis of Relapsing/Remitting and then started to experience a worsening of symptoms over many years. Remission periods lessen and shorten in duration and eventually become non-existent. The course of MS becomes steadily progressive.

4. Primary Progressive

There is no history of relapses in these patients. Disease begins with a slow progression of neurological deficits. Problems appear and gradually worsen over time.

The above list is not necessarily exhaustive. It is thought that due to the unpredictability of MS there may well be more 'sub-classifications'.

For example, although general consensus says that in Secondary Progressive MS relapses eventually become non-existent, there are some people who are classified as Secondary Progressive with 'relapsing tendencies'. Episodes where symptoms worsen could be down to stress, or perhaps the body is working harder to fight off an infection, such as a cold or UTI.