

Dr Jon LaPook: Angela Dawson-Milton struggled⁽¹⁾ with vague symptoms for over a year.

Angela: I started having kind of tingling⁽²⁾ and numbness⁽³⁾, sort of, on my feet and my finger tips⁽⁴⁾.

LaPook: Until a brain scan helped doctors diagnose her with Multiple Sclerosis or MS. It's a neurological disease whose symptoms include fatigue, weakness, blurred⁽⁵⁾ vision and loss of sensation. Doctors have always known it affects more women than men, but they had never seen such a dramatic⁽⁶⁾ difference until now. A study of over 30,000 patients shows that over the past 20 years the ratio of women to men with the disease has increased from about 2 to 1 to 4 to 1. Researchers also believe the number of cases in both men and women is also rising.

Dr Jeffrey Dunn: There's ongoing debate as to whether the actual incidence of MS is increasing in this country or if we're just getting better at diagnosing it.

LaPook: In the last two decades, there's been greater use of a type of brain scan called MRI which detects white spots indicating nerve damage.

Dr Saud Sadiq: ...If we have some positive data...

LaPook: Also, before this sophisticated test, doctors may have dismissed⁽⁷⁾ symptoms in women as being psychological.

So, in the past, when a woman would come in with these mild⁽⁸⁾ symptoms or a man would come in, would they be treated differently?

Dr Sadiq: They'd be treated differently. Men would be taken... At least in my experience, men would be taken more seriously.

LaPook: MS is an autoimmune disease and they are known to affect more women than men. Researchers are also examining factors unique to females, such as hormone replacement therapy (HRT), birth control pills and pregnancy. The bottom line⁽⁹⁾? Doctors now know to be on the lookout⁽¹⁰⁾ for MS in women and earlier diagnosis can mean earlier treatment from one of six FDA-approved medications for this disease.

Dr Jon LaPook, CBSnews, New York

Lexical helpline:

1. **struggle (v):** try very hard to deal with a problem
2. **tingling:** paraesthesia, pins and needles
3. **numbness:** lack of sensations
4. **finger tips:** the end of the fingers
5. **blurred:** unclear, indistinct
6. **dramatic:** sudden and marked
7. **dismiss (v):** refuse to consider
8. **mild:** not strong or severe
9. **the bottom line:** the final result
10. **be on the lookout:** be attentive, on the watch