

Helena: Hi, my name is Helena and I work at the MS Trust and I also have MS myself. In this video we're going to try to explain some common MS symptoms and why we get them. To help us out we've spoken to some scientists at Barts hospital in London who will explain the science-y bit. And we have also enlisted some scouts in Letchworth who are trying out some experiments to try to explain how it feels to have these symptoms.

Professor David Baker: With multiple sclerosis you get many different symptoms and that's because the brain controls many, many different functions. Anything that the brain controls can be affected with multiple sclerosis.

Explaining problems with thinking

Dr Jodie Stephenson: Different parts of our brain control different parts of what we do and if we get problems in parts of our brain that control concentration or memory then we can have problems with these functions.

Scout leader: This is on a piece of elastic so the further you go along there, the harder it actually gets because you're pulling against the elastic and the elastic is trying to pull the loop.

Scout: It was quite hard because as you got further the elastic pulled quite hard and made it more shaky, I guess, so it's quite easy to get caught out.

Scout leader: So concentrating is hard enough but what happens if we distract you a little bit?

Scout: It was really hard to concentrate once the distractions came in so with the tinsel, because of the sound it sort of distracted you and it made it so much more harder.

Scout leader: How do you think it would feel to have that kind of distraction going on all day?

Scout: Like really hard to do stuff.

Explaining problems with vision

Professor David Baker: Blurry vision can be a common problem in MS. That may be because of the areas of the brain that controls vision are affected or it could be the connections between the brain and the eye that are affected. It also depends on how the muscles in the eye work so there are many different ways, it could be how you sense or how the muscles move. And that can affected your vision.

Scout: I am smudging the Vaseline over the eye of the goggles.

Scout: It's representing someone who has multiple sclerosis and is having problems with their eyes.

Scout: I can't really see out of this eye. This eye is perfectly normal but this I just see sort of shapes. I can't really see, I can see light and shapes but I can't see detail.

Scout: I don't think I'd be able to read like this because all the words would mix together and just become one big smudge.

Explaining problems with walking

Dr Jodie Stephenson: Standing and walking requires a lot of muscles and a lot of sensations to tell the brain what we are doing and where we are. If an immune attack occurs affecting the message from the brain to the muscles we can have problems with walking. If the messages from the brain about the sensations are lost then we can have problems with our balance. We also have what's called a 'mini brain' at the back of the head which controls our balance and our coordination. If we get immune attacks there, this can be a big problem.

Explaining problems with speech

Professor David Baker: Why do we have speech problems? Again, it's a problem of coordination. Of coordinating the muscles in the mouth and also the bits in the brain that tell the muscles in the mouth how to speak.

Scout leader: The whole point is to make it awkward to speak. Give one of these ones a go. How about the top one?

[inaudible]

Scout: It was really frustrating because you really just wanted to say it but it just wouldn't come out right and it was just like impossible to say it right.

Scout leader: How about the next one? Jamie, give it a go!

[inaudible]

Scout leader: Do you think people would recognise that you had a disability necessarily?

Scout: Probably think you're a bit drunk.

Explaining funny sensations

Dr Jodie Stephenson: So in our body we have lots of what we call sensory nerves and these sense things like pain and heat and touch. If some of these areas get damaged, like in MS, then the messages can be sent to the brain accidentally and cause strange sensations like burning sensations or pins and needles.

Scout leader: Right, I've got here some fizzy water and I'm going to put it in the bowl. Just put your fingers in the bowl and tell me what it feels like.

Scout: That's fizzy.

Scout leader: Yeah? Put your hand right in. Can you imagine what that, so which symptom are we looking at there?

Scout: That's pins and needles.

Scout leader: Describe how it feels.

Scout: Nasty!

Scout leader: Put your hand in and tell us how it feels.

Scout: It's like, it's hard to explain but it's like really fizzy and you can like feel the bubbles and it feels really awkward.

Explaining problems with weeing

Professor David Baker: Problems with your bladder are very isolating for people with MS because it may mean that they don't go out in public because they're frightened they're going to wet themselves. Now, the problem of the bladder is twofold. One is either you can't hold your wee or the other one is that you can't get rid of it. And what you have to do to get rid of it is you've got to open one muscle and squeeze the bladder with another muscle. And because of MS it's a problem of coordination of the nerve signalling, that's why you have problems. You can't squeeze and relax to make the wee come out.

Professor David Baker: Multiple sclerosis is a problem of altered nerve signalling so it can affect any part of the body because your body is controlled by nerves. So it can affect your eyes, affect your hearing, your smell, your movement, going to the toilet front and back end, and feeling, pain. You name it! There's many, many different things that can happen. Each person's journey may be different.

Scout: I had never heard of MS before and now I know quite a lot about it.

Scout: I'd never heard of it before, but now I know a lot.

Scout leader: Okay, do you have a little bit more sympathy for people with MS?

Scout: Yeah, I definitely do because I never knew about them before.

Professor David Baker: Oh, why don't you subscribe to MSTV?

Scouts [together]: Subscribe to MSTV!