

# History and activities of the Don Carlo Gnocchi Multiple Sclerosis Center

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The Center for Care and Research of Multiple Sclerosis was founded in 1987 as a result of the collaboration between the Don Carlo Gnocchi Foundation and the University of Milan. The center consists of 30 beds, connecting the clinic with two modern laboratories; one for biological and the other for neurophysiological research and diagnosis. Professor Cazzullo primarily advocated the Multiple Sclerosis Center, and under his scientific guidance the center has developed its scientific programme and has helped an increasing number of multiple sclerosis patients. The Don Carlo Gnocchi Foundation also played a central role in the development of the Centro Santa Maria Nascente Research Hospital (IRCCS), which was established in 1991 by the Italian Ministry of Health in Milan, Italy. To date, the center has cared for more than 1500 multiple sclerosis patients from all over Italy.

The center currently researches all of the main fields in multiple sclerosis, including the genetic, immunological and virological aspects of the disease. Staff at the center also engage in treating the disease and rehabilitating patients, both physically and psychologically. Particular attention is provided to the families of multiple sclerosis patients, where training courses and home care assistance is arranged. Recently, the

center has introduced a treatment and rehabilitation regime using virtual reality laboratory techniques.

The center and its staff have developed and benefited from its collaboration with internationally renowned institutions. Scientists from the center have attended training and clinical update sessions abroad, while inviting scientists from around the world to visit the center. The Immunology Department at the University of Milan, under the directorship of Professor Mario Clerici, investigates inflammation and the aetiology of multiple sclerosis with regards to its clinical course. So far, these studies have confirmed that an imbalance in the immune system with an increased level of Type I cytokine stimulated by mitogens, is present in the multiple sclerosis patient. It has also been found that the production of Type II cytokine is lower in multiple sclerosis patients as compared to a control group. Studies in the future should concentrate on reducing abnormal levels of cytokine and seek ways to suppress or stimulate the immune response.

The International Symposium on Multiple Sclerosis Research and Care has been an important initiative in bringing together scientists from all over the world, which has reflected the scientific and clinical aspirations of the center.