

## A Teacher In Tune With MS

(NAPSA)—Blindness. Slurred speech. Tremors. Overwhelming tiredness. All are symptoms of multiple sclerosis (MS), but no two cases are alike. Many people who suffer from multiple sclerosis take years of testing to get a proper diagnosis. Only then can they start managing the disease and returning to a normal life. MS, a chronic disease of the central nervous system, affects over 400,000 people in the U.S. Nerves in the brain and spinal cord are progressively damaged, affecting balance, sensation, movement and body functions. MS affects everyone differently and experts still do not know its exact cause. Though the disease is not inherited, there is slight increase in risk for first-degree relatives. Being diagnosed with MS can initially be devastating to both patients and their loved ones. People living with MS are able to find support through each other and organizations such as the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, which organizes support groups for patients and their loved ones.

Additionally, there are various drug therapies that can help people with MS cope with this disabling disease. However, there is no cure for MS, and individual experience with drug treatments will vary. One such example is Angela Lott, 46, who began playing the violin at the age of 6 and has shared her love of music with others as both a teacher and performer for the past 22 years. MS completely changed her life after she was diagnosed and began to experience vision problems that



**Angela Lott makes music in spite of multiple sclerosis.**

challenged her ability to continue to play the violin and teach. Lott began taking a drug called AVONEX (Interferon beta-1a), a once-weekly injected MS therapy, and continues to take the therapy today. Evidence suggests that immunomodulatory drugs (drugs that control the immune system) initiated early in the course of MS delay the disease's progression.

"Music is therapeutic for me. Now when I perform a violin concert, people say that they would never know that I have MS," said Lott. "I always tell my students how playing the violin allowed me to get a great education because of the scholarship doors it opened up for me. Through my music, I show that it is possible to overcome the personal challenge of having MS, and show myself and others that I'm not letting MS hold me back."

Lott, a music educator in Detroit, Michigan, enjoys inspiring MS patients and educating people about the disease.

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This story describes the experience of one individual. Since each individual will experience therapy differently, not everyone will have similar results. Angela Lott has received funding from Biogen Idec to speak to people about her experiences with MS.

### **Important Safety Information About AVONEX (Interferon beta-1a)**

AVONEX (Interferon beta-1a) will not cure MS but has been shown to decrease the number of flare-ups (exacerbations) and slow the occurrence of some of the physical disability that is common in people with relapsing forms of MS. As with all medications, AVONEX can cause side effects, some of which are serious. Before you start taking AVONEX, you should talk with your doctor about the benefits and risks of AVONEX to decide if AVONEX is right for you.

Sometimes interferons, including AVONEX, make people feel sad. If you are taking AVONEX and feel unusually sad, you should tell a family member or friend right away and call your doctor as soon as possible.

Some people have had severe allergic reactions, a drop in their red or white blood cell levels, heart problems or changes in their thyroid function while taking AVONEX.

Some people have had seizures while taking AVONEX. It is not known whether the seizures were related to their MS, AVONEX or to a combination of both. If you have a seizure, call your doctor right away.

Your liver may be affected by taking AVONEX and a few people have developed severe liver injury. Your doctor may ask you to have regular blood tests to make sure that your liver is working properly. If your skin or the whites of your eyes become yellow, or if you are bruising easily, call your doctor immediately.

If you become pregnant while taking AVONEX, you should stop taking AVONEX immediately. Tell your doctor and consider enrolling in the AVONEX Pregnancy Registry. For more information, call 1-800-456-2255.

The most common side effects of people taking AVONEX include flu-like symptoms (fever, chills, sweating, muscle aches and tiredness). These symptoms usually occur early during the course of therapy and, for many people, these symptoms lessen or go away over time. Talk with your doctor for ways to help manage these symptoms.

For more information on the side effects of AVONEX, refer to the Patient Medication Guide at [www.AVONEX.com](http://www.AVONEX.com) or call 1-800-456-2255. This information is not intended to replace discussions with your health care provider.