

Eva Marsh conquered her MS with determination and an indomitable spirit. But was she just very lucky?

Black Patent Shoes – Dancing with MS

By Eva Marsh ISBN: 0-9681392-0-5 Review by Sylvia Brown

This is not a book for the faint hearted. In her 35 years of living with MS, Canadian Eva Marsh has certainly endured some very severe relapses. Though officially diagnosed at 22, Eva can trace MS back to as young as eight.

Her worst attack left her totally paralysed down the right side and bedridden. She had difficulty speaking and chewing, and the doctor wanted to put her on a ventilator.

This story of recovery (or recoveries) is unlike any other I have read. There is no mention of diets, vitamin supplements or healing a leaky gut etc. In fact after each episode Eva is given high doses of ACTH steroids.

However, after many years of researching MS literature, Eva concludes that perhaps this was not the best treatment to have undertaken. She believes that her truly remarkable recovery from each episode of illness was achieved, not through drugs, but through her indomitable spirit and determination. To prove this point she recovers from her final bout of MS without any steroid treatment at all.

Eva's approach is largely mind over matter. Sadly, sometimes this approach does have its limits. In this sense I think Eva has been extremely lucky because in her case disease activity came and went spontaneously.

Eva is fairly dismissive of therapies such as diet, fish oil, vitamins and hyperbaric oxygen therapy. How fortunate she is not to have needed to explore such avenues in order to stabilise her MS; not all of us can afford to be so dismissive!

Her personal rehab programme

Eva developed her own personal rehabilitation programme, which seems to have worked in a remarkable way for her. She believes that function can be recovered through exercising, moving, crawling and mobilising your joints until you literally drop. Many a time Eva was found asleep in the hallway on all fours mid-crawl!

She believes absolutely in her

body's ability to recover. She likens it to the way a baby learns to walk, or the strength and ability taught through the discipline of ballet.

I have tried intense exercise programmes and my problem with this approach is that I experience a real backlash in my legs. Although I gain in overall strength it does not help me recover. I just end up stiff, fatigued and in a worse pickle. I think it is wiser to listen to your body, push yourself and then rest when you need to.

Myelin can repair itself

Through Eva's extensive research she finds plentiful evidence in the literature to back up her beliefs that myelin can repair itself, movement speeds up repair, and muscle atrophy can be reversed. These revelations offer us all a great deal of hope.

Some of her other beliefs I do find a bit harder to swallow, such as her theory that MS runs its course and arrests itself, as it did in her case.

Eva's relapses hit her hard and fast. As Eva quotes, "Spontaneous repair to damaged myelin begins in 17-19 days (Bunge et al '61). Eva fought back from these setbacks with an insatiable determination that is nothing short of remarkable.

What if Eva's MS had not gone into remission so soon? I think recovery would have been



much harder. In my experience the longer a relapse and period of disability lasts, the more difficult it is to make a full recovery.

Also although I agree that myelin repair is possible, I also know that more permanent damage to the nerves can occur. In such cases I am not saying that repair is to be ruled out, but just that it is a lot more difficult to achieve.

Another theory I find a little hard to swallow is Eva's suggestion that progressive MS may have more to do with lack of intervention with physical therapy, than actual worsening of the disease. Although in many cases there is definitely an element of neglect, sometimes MS does progress in spite of all mental and physical efforts to prevent it.

That is not to belittle her achievement. Where many would have given in, Eva did not! It is truly shocking to read about the ignorance surrounding MS in the 1960s. Doctors were so discouraging to patients who

wanted to help themselves. If you had MS you were discriminated against and written off. To reject these accepted beliefs and prove them all wrong in the way Eva did really does take some doing.

And it is not as though she had an easy life either. We read how her marriage fell apart soon after diagnosis, the terrible divorce she endured and how she picked herself up and coped as a single mother with two small children.

In spite of MS and all these challenges she even managed to go back to university and obtain a degree in biomedical topics followed by a Masters degree. The strength of spirit it must have taken to do all this is truly

Poem

By Eva Marsh

I cannot accept that I must be paralyzed.
I cannot accept that I must sit still and be useless.
I cannot accept that I must stay out of the sun.
I cannot accept that there is nothing I can do to
alter the course of the inexorable.
Maybe they can't do anything, but I will.
My reality will be different.

phenomenal.

Eva does use the tools of yoga and visualisation to aid her recoveries. Maybe she somehow managed to activate the mind-body connection in a powerful way to achieve healing and repair of the damage caused by the MS?

I recommend reading this book. It is a gripping read

and Eva's Story will indeed inspire and spur you on!

Info Box

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Eva also runs workshops to teach how to dance the steps in self healing and recovery, the vital moves that speed healing and reconnect damaged pathways, the imagery that widens the gate for future messages to travel, and how the mind and will influence wellness.

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Antegren available next year

A new drug for MS, Antegren, is expected to be available on prescription next year. Made by Irish drugs manufacturer Elan, Antegren is in the final stages of multinational clinical trials and will be submitted for licensing approval.

More than 2000 MS patients have been enrolled in Antegren trials so far. Results show that twice as many on the drug were free of relapses compared to those given a placebo. There were also marked reductions in brain lesions.

Antegren works by blocking the cells responsible for inflammation. Subrata Ghosh, Professor of Gastroenterology at Imperial College, London, one of the trial leaders, said: "With MS, tiny molecules on the immune system cells act like a postage stamp directing them to specific areas, causing chronic inflammation. What Antegren does is to block these so-called address molecules so they can't reach their destination."

Daily Mail Feb 24 2004

Worried about farmed salmon?

There have been worries that farmed salmon is high in cancer-causing PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls.) A healthy and toxic-free alternative

is trout, which is also rich in Omega 3 essential fatty acids.