



LETTER FROM THE EDITORS: TRIBUTES TO JUNE HALPER



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It's hard to believe that 3 months have already passed since we lost June Halper. Without June's vision and unwavering support, the *International Journal of MS Care* (*IJM*SC) would not have launched in 1999, nor would it have continued to expand its impact on the MS community over the years. Thanks to June, the *IJM*SC has remained free for both authors and readers, allowing clinicians, trainees, and early-career researchers to easily submit their work and access its content. This unique aspect of the journal reflects June's dedication to inclusivity and the broad dissemination of knowledge, benefiting healthcare providers, individuals with MS, and their loved ones.

June profoundly impacted many members of the CMSC community, and we would like to share a few testimonials from our editorial board and CMSC leadership with our readership in her honor. What follows below are the words of those individuals.

Thank you for reading.

— **Francois Bethoux, MD**

*Editor in Chief, IJM*SC
Director of Rehabilitation Services,
Mellen Center for MS Treatment and Research, Cleveland Clinic
Medical Director, Arts and Medicine Institute, Cleveland Clinic Foundation
Professor of Medicine, Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine

— **M. Alissa Willis, MD**

*Associate Editor, IJM*SC
Vice Chair and Section Head of General Neurology, Cleveland Clinic

“It is hard to believe that June Halper has left us 3 months ago already. Without June's vision and steadfast support, the *International Journal of Multiple Sclerosis Care* would not have launched in 1999, and would not have continued to grow its impact on the MS community over the years. In addition, June has allowed the *IJM*SC to remain free to authors and readers, so that clinicians, trainees, and early-stage researchers could easily submit their manuscripts and access content. This very unique characteristic of *IJM*SC highlights June's passion for inclusion and for the wide dissemination of knowledge, benefiting care providers, individuals with MS, and their loved ones alike. June has touched many members of the Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers (CMSC) community. We wanted to share with our readership a small sample of testimonials from members of our editorial board and CMSC leadership.

— **Francois Bethoux, MD**

*Director of Rehabilitation Services, Mellen Center for MS Treatment and Research, Cleveland Clinic
Medical Director, Arts and Medicine Institute, Cleveland Clinic Foundation
Professor of Medicine, Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine*

“June was a bright light that will be sorely missed in the MS care community. She was a champion who helped so many and was the true epitome of a mentor and friend. I would not be the neurologist I am today without June. She encouraged me, gave me opportunities, opened doors for me, and sometimes pushed me when I needed it. I am eternally grateful for her kind and beautiful spirit and believe that her legacy will continue on not only through the work of CMSC, but through every life that she touched directly and indirectly.

— **Mitzi Joi Williams, M**

*Founder and CEO Joi Life Wellness Group, LLC
CMSC Inclusion and Diversity Chair*

June was a breath of fresh air, a visionary who made things happen. She created an organization that spanned supposedly complementary disciplines who theoretically were aiming at the same goals to make MS patients better. However, before June, these disciplines worked in silos, often reinforcing their approaches through confirmation biases. June opened the dialogue and helped grow comprehensive care. She created an annual meeting where various disciplines could see and hear other viewpoints, increase understanding of what patients experience, and enable a more patient-centered focus. A tireless worker who will be missed by so many and I am certainly one of those individuals.

—Gary Cutter, PhD

*Professor Emeritus of Biostatistics
University of Alabama at Birmingham, School of Public Health
NARCOMS*

I met June at my first CMSC meeting in Fort Worth, Texas, in 2021. From the moment I met her, she was inviting, kind, and inclusive. Over the years, she encouraged me to become more active in the CMSC and to start playing a role in the growth of the organization. I will never forget being on a plane to Barcelona for ECTRIMS in 2016 or 2017 after an awful night of sleep in coach and running into June (who happened to be on the same flight). Through my sleep-weary eyes, I saw a very spry and awake June, and she said, “Jeff, I need you to co-chair the Mental Health Special Interest Group and be on the CMSC board of governors.” My wife (also on the flight) assured me that I was awake, and suddenly I was on the board. It was in this capacity, and later as a board member-at-large, that I was able to truly watch June in action. She was involved in so many aspects of MS care, and the CMSC and IOMSN were her life and loves. I watched her make difficult decisions by relying on a depth of knowledge developed through many years of work in this field and as the director of these organizations. She could be fiery, and she could be very calm...either way, she tried to put the needs of the field and the organizations first. She directed the development of the CMSC from a small group into one of the largest MS organizations of health care providers in the world. When June asked me about a year and a half ago to run for president of the CMSC, I was honored and humbled. Coming from her, that request was a major compliment. When I became president-elect, I was very excited to head the board and work with this amazing woman. I still am thrilled to have assumed the presidency, but I will always lament not having the chance to work in this position alongside one of the legends in MS care. I am so thankful to June for taking me in when I was young in the field, mentoring me through the CMSC and my board work, and creating an organization that we all can be so proud of.

—Jeff Wilken, PhD

*Assistant Professor of Neurology, Georgetown Department of Neurology
Partner, Neuropsychology Associates of Fairfax, LLC
Executive Director and Founder, Washington Neuropsychology Research Group, LLC
President, Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers (CMSC)*

June Halper was a blessing to so many people during her time on this earth. She was a blessing to me, and I'd like to share a little bit about how I came to know June. I met June around 1988 when I was a postdoctoral fellow at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx. There was an affiliation between the AECOM MS Center and the Bernard W. Gimbel Multiple Sclerosis Comprehensive Care Center at Holy Name Hospital in Teaneck, New Jersey, a center that June led and had helped to found in 1985. I was asked to spend 1 day a week at the Gimbel Center working with June and seeing MS patients there. June turned out to be a wonderful mentor. I learned so much about taking care of people with MS from June. To June, taking care of someone with MS meant taking care of the whole person who happened to have the disease, 24/7. Each person with MS was special to her. June was wholly dedicated to her patients and those who worked with her were expected to be wholly dedicated to the patients as well. I recall that she telephoned me when I was still in the hospital no more than 5 hours after I had delivered my daughter to discuss a patient care issue and ask me to send in a prescription for a patient! In addition to being a mentor, June was a wonderful friend to me. Soon after I got home from the hospital, she drove over to my house in Westchester County to show me how to burp my daughter. I used to refer to her as “God's gift to people with MS in New Jersey” when I worked with her. I gave her that moniker for a number of years (I am not sure she ever knew that I called her that) until I realized that this was too limiting and that June's work reached far beyond New Jersey. Then she became “God's gift to people with MS in the world.” June's work will not end with her passing.

—Anne Cross, MD

*Past president of CMSC
Professor of Neurology
Manny and Rosalyn Rosenthal—Dr. John Trotter MS Chair in Neuroimmunology
Washington University in St Louis*

This is such a loss. For nearly my entire career, June has been an enduring presence, leading the CMSC, facilitating our career paths, and [making] so many other contributions to MS. Her lifelong dedication and commitment is rare and I will miss her greatly. My best thoughts to her family and friends as we all process her passing and reflect on a legacy that will endure, the CMSC. [She was] a true Giant of MS Care.

—Corey Ford, MD, PhD

*Past president of CMSC
Professor of Neurology
Senior Associate Dean for Research
University of New Mexico*

June Halper was a trailblazer in the field of MS care. Her leadership helped transform CMSC into a global hub for education, research, and collaboration, benefiting countless healthcare professionals and patients. With a deep compassion for those living with MS, she championed comprehensive care, addressing not only medical needs but also emotional and community support. Her impact on the MS community is profound, influencing care standards worldwide. June's legacy is one of unwavering dedication, innovation, and lasting contribution to improving the lives of those with MS and related disorders. The community she helped build will always remember her as a tireless advocate and a fearless leader, leaving an enduring legacy of hope and progress.

I will deeply miss her. Personally, she has had a profound impact on my life. I will continue all efforts to pave the path forward in her honor and memory to ensure her legacy shines through.

—Carrie Hersh, DO, MSc, FAAN

*CMSC Secretary
Director, Multiple Sclerosis Health and Wellness Program
Associate Program Director, MS and Neuroimmunology Fellowship
Mellen Program for Multiple Sclerosis
Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health
Associate Professor of Neurology, Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of
Medicine of Case Western Reserve University*

June dedicated herself to the care of others, a beacon of strength, creativity, and mentorship in her profession. She shared herself so generously—the compassion she showed her patients, the guidance she offered her colleagues, and the inspiration she brought to all who knew her. She will always hold a special place in my heart.

—Marie Namey, MSN, CNS (retired)

*Past President of CMSC
Founder of IOMSN*

What a huge loss! June touched each of our lives on a personal and professional level! She was a force to be reckoned with, all wrapped up in a small package. She was one of a kind and never will be matched in dedication, drive, and love of the work.

June Halper, although a singular person, made an indelible mark on countless lives. Her dedication and love for the work of MS was evident but her impact was truly felt by those living with MS, their families, her coworkers and the MS professionals whose lives she touched. June's drive, energy and passion was infectious, and she mobilized a small group of professionals into a dynamic multidisciplinary organization that guides much of how we view and treat MS today. I would venture to say that the vast majority of individuals living with MS and those of us working in the field of MS have been directly or indirectly touched by June's work.

June was the embodiment of comprehensive care. She invited everyone to have a seat at the table with an equal stake to learn, contribute, and further the advancement of MS care. Her legacy is one of hope, progress, and movement toward a greater understanding of MS, with the ultimate goal of making a better life for those living with MS. She knew that to do that, she had to support health care professionals [in gaining] the knowledge and skills to affect change. June did exactly that! She created or facilitated innumerable educational offerings including the exceptional CMSC annual meeting, published on a wide range of MS topics, and most importantly, developed support networks that have empowered professionals and transformed the landscape of MS care.

Beyond being a mentor and colleague, June was my cherished friend, and I will miss her deeply. I am privileged to have known this amazing woman and grateful to have learned from her.

Rest in peace, June. Your work here is done but will never be forgotten!

—Patty Bobryk, PT, MSCS, MHS, ATP

Chair, IOMSRT

“

Such a huge loss. June will be missed. I had not yet learned that she had died and my first patient this morning asked why I chose MS. I recounted my time at Gimbel Center during my nursing student years. Unbeknownst to me, June must have been looking down on that interaction! She touched so many of us, her impact profound.

—**Carrie Sammarco, NP**

*NYU Langone Health
IJMSC Board Member*

“

June will live in so many of us forever. She was so committed, compassionate, and loved everyone. She guided me in my professional development and in meeting so many of my now friends. I'm so grateful to have been able to work closely with her and I will always cherish the memories. I can't imagine thinking of nursing or MS and not reminiscing about her. I pray for the peace and comfort of her family knowing that she touched so many people's lives.

—**Patricia Pagnotta, APN**

CMSC Bylaws Committee Co-Chair

“

[June] was a force of nature and even though I was the least noticeable person on the IOMSN board I felt very noticed by June.... I know there's a big hole there at the moment but her presence will always felt, in all things MS and for all those who knew her, which brings me comfort and drives my nursing practice.

—**Susan Agland, MSN, RN**

*Hunter New England Local Health District
IJMSC Board Member*

“

We are very saddened; may her soul rest in peace. Her legacy is forever lasting as she beautifully touched the lives of many, including me.

—**Ahmed Obeidat, MD, PhD**

*Associate Professor, Neurology
Medical College of Wisconsin
IJMSC Board Member
MS-PIT Chair*

“

I am devastated. June was the ultimate champion for so many people. She was especially impactful for me in getting dietitians involved in the CMSC.

—**Tyler Titcomb, PhD, RDN**

*MS-RD Co-Chair
Research Associate
University of Iowa*

“

June's lifelong dedication to improving the lives of those with MS and championing clinicians, trainees, and researchers remains unparalleled.

—**Nora Fritz, PhD, PT, DPT, NCS**

*CMSC Senior Member-at-Large
Associate Professor, Physical Therapy Program and Department of Neurology
Director of Research, Department of Health Care Sciences
Wayne State University*

“

June was a force of nature. Her commitment to advancing MS care was unparalleled. I am grateful to have known her, and to have worked with her on the CMSC board many years ago. She will be missed.

—**Marcia Finlayson, PhD, OT Reg (Ont), FCAHS, FCAOT**

*Professor, Queen's University, Queen's Health Sciences School of Rehabilitation Therapy
IJMSC Board Member*

June Halper has been instrumental in steering the operations of CMSC. She was a visionary and a humble person. Through her endless efforts she has changed the lives of patients living with multiple sclerosis. I am forever grateful for her impact on trainees in their early careers in the field of multiple sclerosis.

—**Nidhiben Anadani, MD**

*Assistant Professor, Department of Neurology
Medical Director, OU Health Neurology Clinic
University of Oklahoma Health Science Center
MS-PiT Co-Chair*

I proposed The Design for Rehabilitation competition to June Halper at CMSC [in] 2018. Not only did she welcome the idea, but [she] supported and funded it. In 2019 at CMSC Seattle, it was a hit and since then, [it has been] an annual event. The event has inspired many young engineering students, and provided an opportunity for me and my co-director (Mikaela Morelli, a professional engineer) to participate in the CMSC vision.

Thank you, June.

—**Christopher Luzzio, MD**

*Professor, Department of Neurology
University of Wisconsin-Madison*

I remember the very first time I met June Halper—it was at a CMSC meeting in the early days of our organization, and I was standing in a corner with a colleague from my clinic. She came up to us noticing that we had name badges that showed we were from Canada. Her first comment was “I love Canadians and what do you think of the meeting?” I remember telling her that it was an excellent meeting, but it would be great to include more nursing presentations as well as content from the Canadian perspective. Her comment was “great idea—let’s see what we can do.” She never forgot her promise, as a few years later we started the International Organization of MS Nurses (IOMSN) in my home city of Calgary, and she always sought Canadian representation for CMSC and IOMSN initiatives. She really did love Canadians.

June became my most significant career mentor and my best friend. She was intelligent and creative, and it was so enjoyable to co-create with her. Her high energy and caring personality made it impossible to ever refuse [to help] her with any project, and she was always thinking of the next big project. June offered her opinions freely and was never afraid to take a firm stand on an issue or apologize later if she felt she was wrong. Through the years, she shared her wisdom when I sought advice and her compassion when life challenged me. She never stopped being there for people and her memory will continue to inspire and guide those involved in the MS care field for many years to come.

—**Colleen Harris, MN, NP, MSCN, MSCS**

*Nurse Coordinator/Nurse Practitioner
University of Calgary MS Clinic*

I was fortunate to know June Halper and am grateful for her support and encouragement.

June’s unwavering commitment to improving lives, training new clinicians, and advancing MS research echoes Fred Rogers’s sentiment that in uncertain times, “Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.” June was a helper.

June has left an incredible mark that will not fade. Her visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to advancing MS care touched so many lives in the world of MS, including mine. I will be forever grateful for her support and encouragement.

—**Mona Bostick RDN, LDN, MSCS**

*Clinical Nutritionist
Food Matters 365, LLC*