

# (REDI)



*Alta Bates Summit  
Medical Center*

A Sutter Health Affiliate

Research Case Study

**Joanna Cooper, M.D.,**  
leads multipronged  
research in the fight  
against multiple  
sclerosis



# New Weapons to Fight MS

Alta Bates Summit's Research and Education Institute (REDI) assists neurologist Joanna Cooper, M.D., and her colleagues in their multi-faceted investigation of multiple sclerosis treatment and care

**Q:** How important is it for you and your colleagues to be involved in research?

**Dr. Cooper:** In order to be a comprehensive multiple sclerosis (MS) center, we must do research—and REDI provides that. REDI collaborates with Sutter East Bay Medical Foundation (SEBMF) and the East Bay Physicians Medical Group to support research at the MS program. We have multiple trials going on that study different stages of this disease and address different mechanisms of novel therapies. At times, we can provide patients expanded access to these therapies. Thanks to REDI's support, this clinical research enhances SEBMF's mission and our ability to execute our mission.

“Research entities look to organizations like REDI to collaborate with and find them qualified investigators.”

**Q:** What types of projects are you working on right now?  
**Dr. Cooper:** One is a clinical trial of a new oral form of treatment for relapsing-remitting MS. All of the treatments until now have been injectables. Several oral agents are in trials, and this one quite promising, based on past experience.

Another trial is looking at developing a novel instrument to measure quality of life for people with MS, called the Functional Index of Living with MS (FILMS). In order to care for patients effectively and address all their needs, a glimpse into various aspects of their quality of life can be helpful. Most instruments that measure quality of life are cumbersome and complex, both for the patient and for the clinician to administer or interpret. What we developed locally, along with one of the senior staff members at REDI (Mark Wesson, CRA) is a simple, 10-minute questionnaire. First, we need to prove that it actually captures what we think it captures, and then we need to show that it's easy to use, both for the patient and the clinician. This is a single-center study, and we're about to go into phase two.



**Q:** How is REDI helping you with these studies?

The oral drug trial I mentioned is very complex to administer because of the safety measures that have been put in place. It involves a huge amount of collaboration with other clinicians from ophthalmology, dermatology, pulmonology, radiology, and internal medicine. Many MS trials involve collaboration with other specialties, so they tend to be heavy on coordinating needs. Everything must fall into place along a particular timeline, and one thing REDI makes happen is allowing for and helping with this interdisciplinary collaboration.

**Q:** What other challenges have you faced in conducting research?

**Dr. Cooper:** Weaving research in with maintaining my practice. As a practicing physician, the challenge is balancing your research with the competing needs of your patients who are not participating in clinical trials. I've recommended REDI to people because REDI Director Kyle Hansen and his staff are doing a very good job. The coordinators are well trained, and they basically can provide the infrastructure.

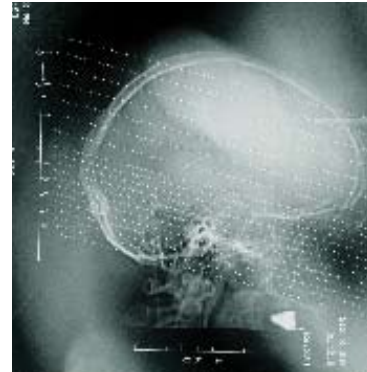
The regulatory requirements have become much stricter, and REDI has taken all this on. All of the coordinators at REDI are trained in biological packaging, for example. All the coordinators know how to shepherd a trial along the regulatory process. So REDI provides that assistance as part of its services, as opposed to the task being part of my practice with my office staff having to do the work.

**Q:** Which task were you most happy to let REDI help out with?

**Dr. Cooper:** Budget negotiating—negotiating the finances with the sponsors as well as with the other clinicians. In the past, I had to negotiate how much other people earned. Even though I'm still involved with budgeting—I approve the budget and I might participate in some of the negotiating—the majority of this work is done by REDI staff. At times, the work is done *only* by them.

**Q:** Why do you think it's important for Alta Bates Summit Medical Center to have an organization like REDI?

**Dr. Cooper:** In time, REDI is going to make a name for itself. When it comes to research, sponsors typically look for a large, well-run, ethically sound institution that they know can enroll patients and generate clean, quality data in a timely manner. Research entities look to organizations like REDI to collaborate with and find them qualified investigators. Under Kyle's direction, REDI will become such an organization.



### CURRENT RESEARCH

Joanna Cooper, M.D., and her colleagues are involved in a well-conceived, comprehensive program for multiple sclerosis (MS) care and clinical research, with a dozen projects currently underway, from single-center to international studies. Her work ranges from trials for innovative medications and combination therapies to a new tool for assessing an MS patient's quality of life and symptom relief therapies. Collectively, the studies are broad in scope, addressing different types and various stages of the disease.