

Jack Osbourne: MS is the new reality



When the celebrity’s MS diagnosis came three weeks after the birth of his first child, it surprised and scared him. But he’s determined to stay in the picture, raising awareness about the disease and becoming a role model for others with the disease.

by Marcella Durand

Jack Osbourne readily admits that he doesn’t exactly fit the common perception of someone who has multiple sclerosis. So the 28-year-old producer, actor, co-star of reality TV shows, son of Ozzy and Sharon Osbourne, husband of Lisa and father of 2-year-old Pearl, is determined to show that there are many faces of MS.

To that end, he sat down recently with Marnie Rothman, a Society volunteer and freelance television producer who also lives with MS. Osbourne talked to her about his new Web docu-series, “You Don’t Know Jack About MS,” and why he is so passionate about raising awareness about the disease. Momentum captured the conversation.

“When I was diagnosed with MS [in 2012], I immediately went online,” Osbourne recalls. “I found that anything out there showed women in their 40s. I was just like, well, that’s not the entire truth. So I made a decision to try to help—I wanted to straighten up some misconceptions about it.”

Osbourne uses his celebrity to do exactly that. At his website youdontknowjackaboutms.com,

he debunks common MS myths, and he speaks regularly in public about life with the disease. Because he's in a unique position to reach people, Osbourne feels he has a certain responsibility to share his experiences.

"I just figured, why not use the platform and put MS on people's agendas?" he asks.



Jack Osbourne (left) acknowledges his diagnosis was difficult at first for his family, including (from right) parents Ozzy and Sharon, sister Kelly, wife Lisa and mother-in-law Gerie Stelly. Photo by Lindsay Woolf.

Managing the disease

Osbourne admits that living with MS can be a challenge in his often fast-paced and physically punishing career.

"My whole family—we're all workaholics. So if someone calls for work, I'm like, 'OK, I'll do it.' I never want to turn it down," he says. "But I'm sure my wife and mother would like me to minimize stress more than I do.

"For me, my biggest stress relief is sleep. I try to get at least eight hours a night. I also take weekends seriously. I'll just hang out at home and try to decompress."

Managing stress and getting enough rest are important components of Osbourne's strategy to live well with the disease. But so are eating well and exercising. "I looked at everything," he says. "What are the treatments out there? What do they do? What are the side effects? What are the things you can do to help that aren't a treatment, like diet and exercise? It was about a whole kind of lifestyle shift."

Osbourne says his research led him to change many of his poor eating habits, such as "stuffing my face with pizza all day." As for exercise, staying cool is paramount for him. While he exercises regularly on an elliptical trainer and likes to do endurance workouts, Osbourne is still searching for an activity that won't make him feel overheated. "Once I'm hot, I can't cool

down,” he says. “I’m trying to find what exercise I can do where I feel like I’m actually doing something, but not killing myself.”

That said, Osbourne admits he often pushes himself beyond what’s usually advisable. “I’ll do these 24-hour adventure races with six bricks in a backpack—like, the worst thing you could possibly do if you have MS. And then I wake up and I’m like, ‘Oh, my legs feel like—ow, I’ve got tingling.’ ”

No holding back

Most people realize at some point in their disease course that MS affects not only them but their families as well. Despite their celebrity, Osbourne’s family is no different, and he acknowledges that his diagnosis was tough on his parents. “My mother still thinks I’m about three seconds away from sudden death,” he jokes.

Osbourne was diagnosed at age 26, three weeks after his daughter, Pearl, was born. He remembers worrying that he might not be around much for his new child. “I thought, I can’t be out of the picture,” he says.

Soon after that, Osbourne had a long conversation with a very good friend who helped him put the disease in perspective. “He is an Iraq and Afghanistan war veteran who got really, really badly injured. It was just the kind of mindset he had that helped,” Osbourne recalls. “I realized, [having MS] is what it is. You can either sit there and be bummed out, or you can figure out a way to work with it and not let it hold you back.”

Osbourne found that educating himself about the disease was vitally important, and planted the seeds for his current drive to raise MS awareness. “Once I had an understanding of it, I was like, ‘OK, I can hang with this for now,’ ” he says.

Marcella Durand is a frequent contributor to Momentum.

Visit youdontknowjackaboutMS.com to learn more about Jack Osbourne’s life with MS.