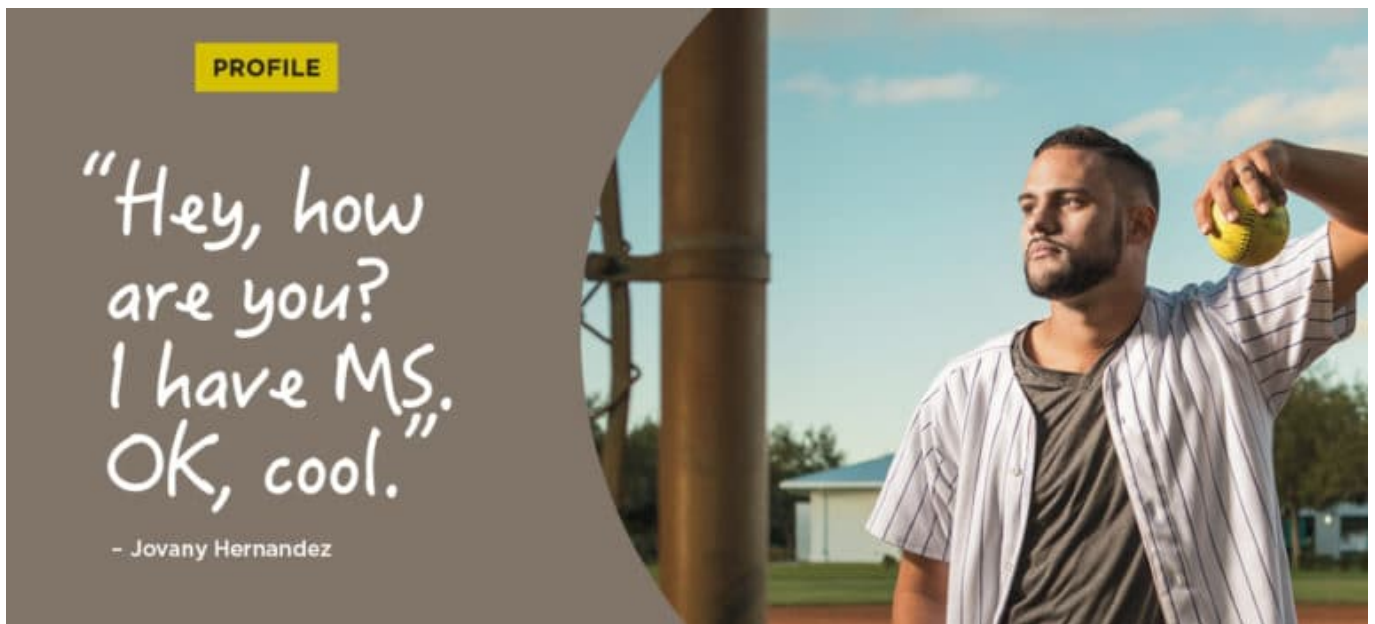


Jovany Hernandez: Sharing his MS story



Jovany Hernandez shares his experience as a Latin American with multiple sclerosis.

In 2016, when Jovany Hernandez started to have a radiating pain in his testes that shot down his leg, he took his symptoms seriously. But as many people do, he let the experiences fade once the pain had passed. "I didn't go back [to the doctor] as much as I should have," he says.



Jovany Hernandez is a Latin American living with MS, and he isn't shy about sharing his MS diagnosis. Photo: Sonya Revell

It took several trips to the ER for Hernandez to be diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. MS is notoriously difficult to diagnose. He thinks his attitude toward his symptoms may have delayed his treatment.

"If I would've gone to the hospital sooner, I'm sure they would have diagnosed me sooner," he says.

At 30, Hernandez isn't a stereotypical I-don't-go-to-the-doctor kind of guy. "I go more than anyone else in my family," he says. "I see my primary care physician once a month." A history of cancer runs in his family, so he has always been mindful of his health.

So, what happened?

When his MS symptoms started, "I thought maybe this is normal. It just feels like pins and needles when I take a shower, but it'll go away." And it did, so he could relax for a while.

Now, however, "relax" doesn't seem to be in his vocabulary. He was laid off from his job while taking the time to spend with his new baby in 2018. "I just thought, maybe now I need

to do everything I can to start doing what I love.”

He’s joined multiple softball leagues. “I play softball five days a week — Sunday through Thursday, every night, sometimes two or three games a day,” he says. He bought his dream turntable setup and started his own DJ business.

He belongs to an [MS support group](#).

Hernandez says he stays engaged with the MS community so that he can be an effective messenger to a public that doesn’t always understand the disease.

“I feel like we need to spread awareness, and that’s why I work with the [National MS Society](#),” he says. “I feel like I’m doing my due diligence.” And as a young Latin American man, he checks off several boxes that contradict the narrative of who gets MS.

So, he’s not shy about sharing his illness.

“I tell everyone,” he says. “I just met you? ‘Hey, how are you? I have MS. OK, cool.’”

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