



Highlights From the 2026 MDA Clinical & Scientific Conference

On March 9, 2026, MDA President and CEO Sharon Hesterlee, PhD, welcomed more than 2,400 people attending the 2026 MDA Clinical & Scientific Conference, both in person in Orlando, Florida, and virtually. The annual three-day conference is the largest global gathering of neuromuscular clinicians, researchers, allied health professionals, industry representatives, and patient advocates.

Dr. Hesterlee acknowledged the extraordinary progress and unique challenges facing the neuromuscular field today. Advances in research and technology are leading to new therapies for people living with neuromuscular diseases, but they also raise new questions and barriers as the science outpaces the infrastructure needed to approve and deliver them.

“That reality places responsibility on all of us,” Dr. Hesterlee told the audience. “It’s incumbent on this community not just to advance science but to work together to align scientific progress with the institutions and systems that might stand in the way.”

This is where she sees MDA playing a vital role. “For more than 70 years, MDA has served as a convener, bringing together groups like this,” she said. “That role has never been more important than it is today.”

Convening minds

The power of the MDA Clinical & Scientific Conference lies in the people it brings together and the discussions they have while in the same room.

On March 8, before the conference's official opening, MDA hosted the MDA Care Center Directors Meeting and the Allied Health Workshop. These specialized networking sessions were tailored to two groups of people essential to the multidisciplinary neuromuscular care model.

In both meetings, participants had the rare opportunity to engage in face-to-face discussions with professionals from institutions around the country who work with similar patient populations and face similar challenges. The Care Center directors shared best practices and approaches to enhance long-term patient outcomes, while the allied health professionals learned from presentations on common clinical issues and shared resources.

MDA is committed to including meetings such as these in the conference to foster learning and collaboration among clinical providers and professionals in the neuromuscular field.

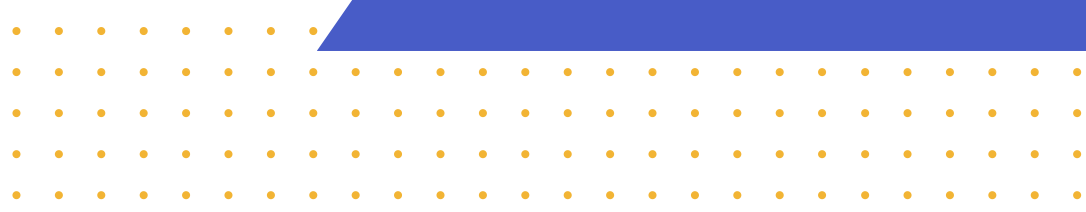
Sessions, abstracts, and posters

The 2026 MDA Clinical & Scientific Conference featured an agenda filled with topics at the forefront of the neuromuscular field.

To appeal to a diverse audience spanning many areas of research and clinical care, more than 30 sessions were organized into seven tracks: ALS, Disease Mechanisms & Therapeutic Strategies, Neurology, Allied Health, Care Trends, Drug Development Considerations, and Lab to Life.

Session topics covered the latest breakthroughs in gene-targeted therapies, muscle regeneration and repair, translational research, and multidisciplinary clinical care. Key highlights included immune response considerations in gene therapy, non-viral delivery approaches to gene therapy, next-generation patient registries, and navigating today's drug development landscape. Fourteen sessions were CE-accredited.





This year's conference also introduced some fresh formats, including Faculty and Fellows Interactive Neuromuscular Case Discussions, informally called "stump the fellows." In this session, chairs Bakri Elsheikh, MBBS, FRCP, FAAN, and Katherine Mathews, MD, presented four case challenges. Starting with basic information about a patient's symptoms and medical history, they asked the fellows which neuromuscular diseases they might suspect and which tests they would order. The chairs then presented the test results and walked the fellows through their step-by-step process of following leads to reach a diagnosis. Dr. Mathews and Dr. Elsheikh sometimes paused to ask the audience if they would back a fellow's hunch or offer an alternate view. This interactive format made for a session that was as entertaining as it was educational.

MDA's conference is known for giving both established and early-career investigators a forum to share scientific innovations through oral sessions and posters. This year, there were 63 oral presentations from abstracts and more than 500 posters detailing research findings and cutting-edge technologies.

As a convener of leaders and practitioners in the neuromuscular field, as well as patient advocates, the MDA Clinical & Scientific Conference has increasingly become an important venue for discussions around research, as well as the regulatory and care delivery challenges shaping real-world practice. The enthusiastic response to this year's conference shows that the community accepts Dr. Hesterlee's challenge to work together to drive scientific progress and improve the delivery of care and therapies to patients.

2026 MDA Clinical & Scientific Conference by the Numbers

- 2,020 in-person attendees
- 403 virtual attendees
- 40 countries represented
- 195 speakers
- 32 sessions
- 63 oral abstract presentations
- 500+ research posters
- 50 Exhibitors
- 27 Patient Advocacy Pavilion participants



Save the Date

2027 MDA Clinical & Scientific Conference
March 21–24, 2027
Rosen Shingle Creek, Orlando, FL