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DOUBLE VISION =

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THROUGH THE EYES OF WOMEN

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**DOUBLE VISION:
THE EXPERIENCE OF MULTIPLE
SCLEROSIS
THROUGH THE EYES OF WOMEN**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Social
Work at Massey University**

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ABSTRACT

Double vision is a common symptom of Multiple Sclerosis (MS). This thesis is also about double vision in other ways. It is concerned with the perceptions of women with MS of the double discrimination, which they experience, both as women and as disabled people. It is also about the disjuncture between medical views of MS and the lived experiences of women with MS.

Seven women with MS were interviewed in depth for this research. Despite considerable diversity in MS experiences, a number of main themes emerged from these interviews. These included years of uncertainty and stress prior to receiving a definite diagnosis of MS, poor communication on the part of health professionals, high financial costs and difficulties associated with MS and the toll on family life, including 'caregiver burnout' and divorce.

Many of the difficulties experienced by these women could have been eased considerably with more information and practical and financial support. The aim of the thesis is to highlight these themes in order to inform people newly diagnosed with MS, their caregivers and families, health and social work professionals and policy makers about some of the main issues and needs experienced by women with MS.

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DEDICATION

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