



Association  
of British  
Neurologists



## Press release

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### **New guidelines move forward treatment of multiple sclerosis**

- The Association of British Neurologists (ABN) revised prescribing guidelines for the treatment of relapsing-remitting MS (RRMS) have been published by the journal *Practical Neurology*
- MS charities had opportunity to comment on the revisions and contribute the patient voice.

#### **NEW guidelines for neurologists on drug treatment for RRMS clarify the complex treatment landscape and stress the importance of patient involvement in decision making.**

In the last 20 years the UK has gone from having no available treatments for RRMS to having eleven. More recently, the treatment of RRMS has altered radically: several new drugs—effective—but also with some significant risks and side-effects - have gained licences. The ABN has responded with a major revision of the guidelines on how these drugs should be used and monitored in MS services across the UK. The guidelines stress the increasing importance of prompt treatment following diagnosis and that people with MS will face complex choices and must play an active role in treatment decisions.

The ABN has also sought the input and advice from the two major UK MS patient groups, the MS Society and the MS Trust and has acknowledged their contribution to and their support for the revisions. This approach reflects the strong commitment amongst MS neurologists to the involvement of people living with MS in what can be complex and difficult choices.

MS is the most common disabling neurological condition affecting young adults in the western world, with over 100,000 people with the condition in the UK. Around 85% of people are initially diagnosed with RRMS which causes distinct attacks of symptoms which then fade away either partially or completely.

The DMTs vary in efficacy, side effects, administration and monitoring and have been categorised accordingly to treat relapse-remitting MS and more active relapsing-remitting MS.

The guidelines recommend starting treatment as early as possible in eligible patients. Everyone diagnosed with MS should have timely access to MS teams, including neurologists and MS specialist nurses. The guidelines also recommend more consistent use of MRI scanning to monitor and assess the effectiveness of treatment.

The UK is ranked 25 out of 27 European countries on the proportion of people with RRMS using DMTs.

### **Prof. Phil Smith, President, ABN**

“Over the past two decades, clinicians working in partnership with the pharmaceutical industry have continued to develop, to test, and to make available new drugs for treating multiple sclerosis, extending substantially the range of effective agents available for relapsing–remitting disease. The ABN warmly applauds these successful endeavours and welcomes this significant improvement in the treatment landscape for MS.”

“Some of these new drugs are complex, a few carrying the small but real risk of serious side effects: this, in combination with the now large number of therapeutic options, has made the choice of the right drug for each individual patient more challenging and complicated than ever before, both for patient and neurologist. We sincerely hope that the 2015 ABN MS treatment guidelines will inform and guide these difficult choices.”

### **Nick Rijke, Executive Director of Policy and Research, MS Society**

“We are very pleased the ABN recommends early treatment of MS with DMTs and recognises the importance of shared decision-making between neurologist and patient when deciding which route to take. We also welcome the emphasis on MRI scanning to support diagnosis and make better treatment decisions. The combination of these recommendations should help ensure fast diagnosis and appropriate, timely treatment for people with MS.”

### **Amy Bowen, Director of Service Development, MS Trust**

“The revised guidelines from the ABN herald a new era in MS care. Treatment choices are increasingly complex and expert guidance is vital to ensure people with MS can make the choices that are right for them. People with MS will need swifter access to neurologists and MS specialist nurses who can support them to understand their options, including the implications of leaving their disease untreated. “

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### **Notes to editors:**

#### About MS

- More than 100,000 people live with multiple sclerosis in the UK
- Symptoms usually start in your 20s and 30s and it affects almost three times as many women as men

- In MS, the [immune system](#), which normally helps to fight off infections, mistakes the coating around nerve fibres (called myelin) for a foreign body and attacks it. This damage leaves scars known as lesions or plaques resulting in a range of symptoms including problems with mobility and balance, vision and dizziness, fatigue, bladder problems, muscle stiffness and depression.
- MS can get steadily worse, or remain unpredictable throughout your life – one day you can be fine, the next you might lose your sight or be unable to move

#### About the Association of British Neurologists

The aim of the Association of British Neurologists is to promote excellent standards of care and champion high-quality education and world-class research in neurology.

The ABN's principal objectives are to:

- Encourage nationwide availability of excellent and equitable neurological services
- Support neurologists and neurological trainees in their clinical practice.
- Support neurologists and neurological trainees in their research and academic activities.
- Increase knowledge of the nervous system and its disorders.
- Ensure the continuing professional development of its members.
- Promote the education of neurological trainees and support learning of neurology throughout medical training.
- Collaborate with the Royal College of Physicians (London, Edinburgh and Glasgow).
- Foster communication with patient interest groups.
- Maintain contacts with neurologists in developed and in developing countries.
- Provide guidance when required for matters relating to neurology

#### About the MS Society

- The MS Society is the leading UK charity for people with MS fighting for better treatment and care to help people with the condition take back control
- The MS Society has played a pivotal role by investing over £150 million in MS research to date which has led to major advances in treatment development
- The MS Society launched the Treat Me Right campaign in April 2014 to call for the right treatment at the right time for people with MS. For further information visit [www.treatmerightms.org.uk](http://www.treatmerightms.org.uk)
- The free MS Society Helpline provides support and information to anyone affected by MS in the UK - 0808 800 8000

#### About the MS Trust

- The MS Trust is a UK charity dedicated to making life better for people living with multiple sclerosis.
- We believe access to high quality information and specialist services for people affected by MS is vital.
- The MS Trust provides free, personalised, evidence based information to help people affected by MS to take charge of their condition and make the choices that are right for them.

- We are the leading provider of specialist education and continuing professional development for health professionals working in MS.
- Through our GEMSS programme we work to produce evidence about what people with MS need and to improve the availability and quality of MS specialist services. For further information visit [www.mstrust.org.uk/gemss](http://www.mstrust.org.uk/gemss)