

A UK survey of SymTrac™ usage and value: 12-month data

Authors: Dean Patrick¹, Adam Brown, PhD¹, Katherine Rhys¹, Carmel Wilkinson², Jenny Pye³, Mhari Coutts⁴, Sarah White⁵, Judith Wilton⁶, Helen Owen⁷, Natalie Gamble⁸, Nicola Faulkner⁹, Steve Medhurst, PhD¹

Affiliations: ¹Novartis Pharmaceuticals UK Limited; ²South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust; ³Torbay Hospital; ⁴Ayrshire Central Hospital; ⁵St George's Hospital, London; ⁶Frimley Park Hospital; ⁷Morrison Hospital, Swansea; ⁸Walsall Manor Hospital; ⁹Hillingdon Hospital

Background

SymTrac is a free app that helps people with multiple sclerosis (MS) track general wellbeing and symptoms over time to build a picture of their health. It was designed by people with MS in collaboration with expert MS healthcare professionals and Novartis Pharmaceuticals Ltd. The data recorded in the app can be shared with MS specialist teams to utilise vital consultation time and support the decision-making process.

In 2017, the SymTrac app was redesigned and enhanced based on feedback from MS nurses. Subsequently, a survey was conducted with nurses and patients to gauge the impact of the app on MS management.

As previously reported, the majority of patients completing the survey at 4–6 months had been using the SymTrac app for over 3 months. The survey revealed the most commonly used features within the app were the appointments feature, medications list and symptom tracker.

Here we explore the impact of SymTrac as reported by nurse responders at 12 months.

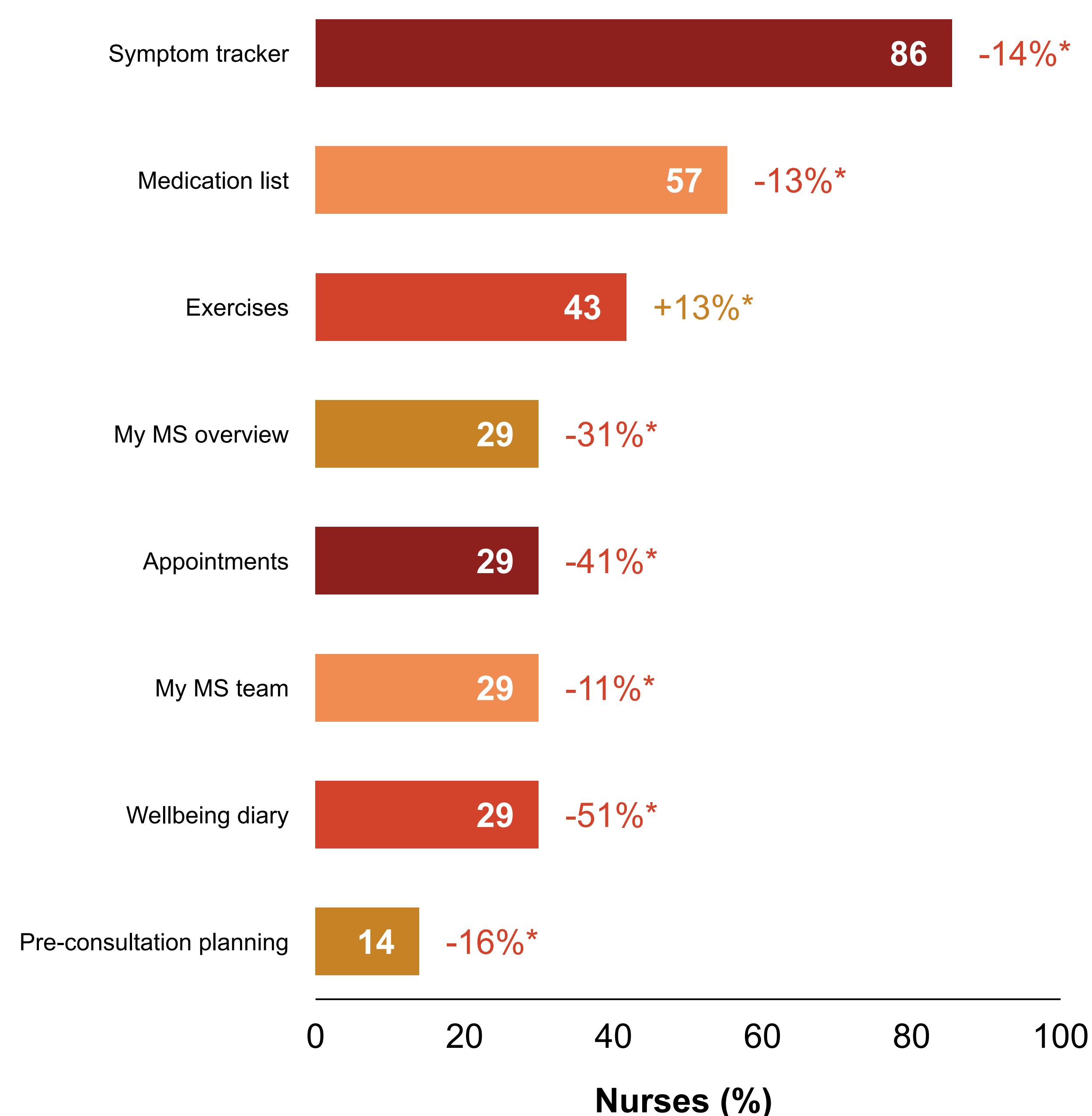
Aim

- To determine how MS nurses utilise and value the SymTrac app over a 12-month period
- To gain an understanding of which specific elements they found most useful

Methods

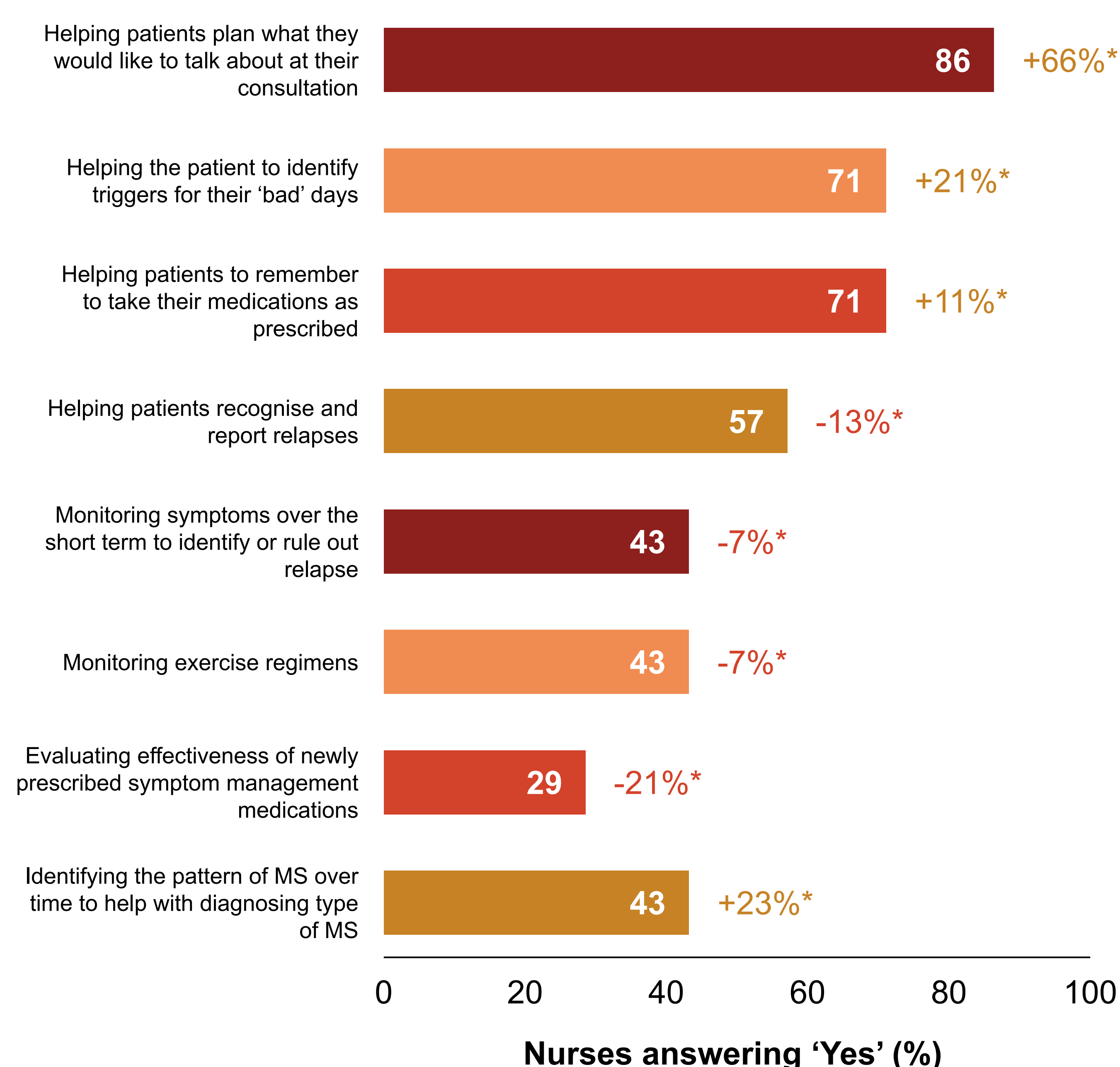
- At baseline, MS nurses from across the UK completed a questionnaire to gain an understanding of their views on relapse reporting and how SymTrac could support MS patients. After 6 and 12 months, the nurses were asked to complete a second and third questionnaire, respectively, to capture their experiences with SymTrac
- Patients with MS also completed a questionnaire 4–6 months after they started using SymTrac. The survey explored elements of the app the patients found most useful. This encompassed symptom reporting, medication and appointment reminders, and how the app could help provide useful information during consultations with their MS team
- The survey questions were structured to be answered either on a rating scale or through a multiple-choice format

Figure 1. Which aspects of SymTrac have you or your patients used over the past 12 months?



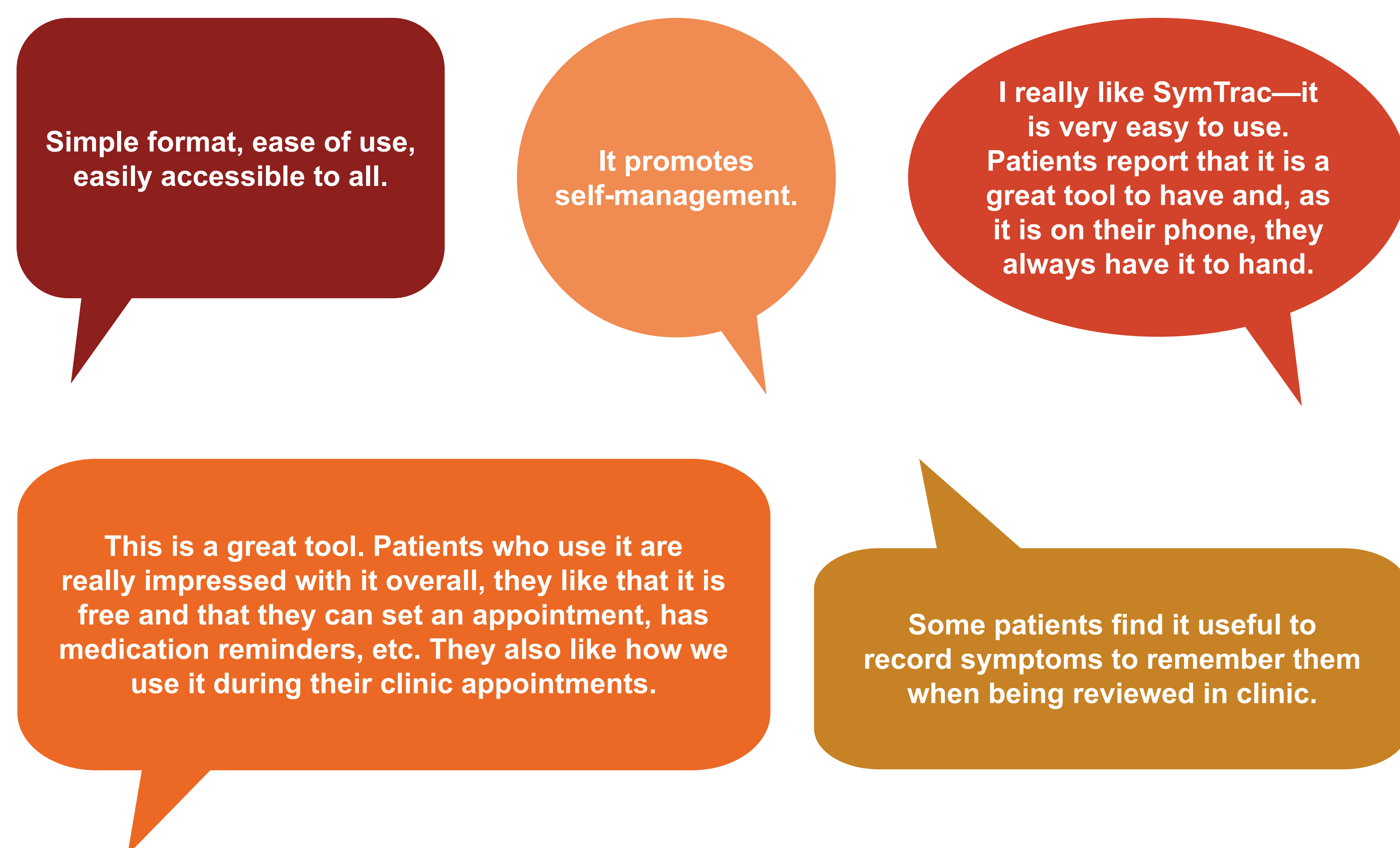
*difference vs 6-month data

Figure 2. Have you and/or your patients used SymTrac in any of the following situations over the past 12 months?



*difference vs 6-month data

Figure 3. What do you like about SymTrac?



Results

Summary of previously reported baseline data

- A total of 10 MS nurses completed the initial survey at baseline and 6 months
- At baseline, the MS nurses believed that SymTrac would be useful to patients for multiple scenarios, including:
 - Managing their medication and monitoring how effective treatment was for controlling their symptoms
 - Recognising and reporting relapses and identifying triggers for 'bad' days
 - Planning what they wish to discuss at their next consultation
- When asked to estimate the proportion of patients who fail to report their most recent relapse, the nurses estimated this to be 33% of patients
 - However, this estimate varied considerably among the individual nurses surveyed

Nurses' feedback at 12 months

- Seven MS nurses completed the survey again at 12 months
- At 12 months, the features of SymTrac most commonly being used by the MS nurses or their patients were the medication list and symptom tracker (Figure 1)
 - These were both identified as commonly used features by patients at 4–6 months
- Six of the 7 MS nurses (86%) surveyed reported that SymTrac was being used by themselves and patients to help plan consultations, demonstrating an increase in this use over the past 6 months (+66%) (Figure 2)
- Over the second 6-month period, SymTrac was also increasingly used for helping patients to identify triggers for 'bad' days and for identifying the pattern of MS over time (+21% and +23%, respectively)
- The appointments and wellbeing diary features of the app showed a marked decline in use over the past 6 months (-41% and -51%, respectively, vs 6-month reports)
- The SymTrac app received a rating of 3/5 for both usefulness in helping patients report relapses and helpfulness in clinical practice

Summary and conclusion

- Previously reported data from MS nurse and patient surveys at 4–6 months demonstrated that the SymTrac app was useful in helping patients keep track of their symptoms, medications and appointments and for planning discussions at upcoming consultations
- Our analysis of MS nurse surveys at 12 months support the findings from the survey results at 4–6 months
 - 86% of nurses surveyed reported that SymTrac was being used for symptom tracking and consultation planning
 - 57% reported that the medication list feature of SymTrac was being used
- Over the second 6 months of use, some marked changes in use of the SymTrac app by MS nurses were noted
 - 66% more nurses reported using the app for helping patients plan consultations
 - 51% fewer nurses reported using the wellbeing diary feature
- Nurses using the app over 12 months felt that it has an accessible, user-friendly format and praised it for supporting self-management

Acknowledgments

The study was funded by Novartis Pharmaceuticals UK Limited. Medical writing and design support was provided by Virgo Health. The final responsibility for the content lies with the authors.

Abbreviation

MS= multiple sclerosis.

Copyright © Novartis Pharmaceuticals UK Limited. All rights reserved.

Poster presented at the MS Trust Conference, 3–5 November 2019, Jurys Inn Hinckley Island Hotel, Hinckley, UK.