Brain health: time matters in multiple sclerosis – developmental process and objectives of international consensus policy recommendations

Gavin Giovanni,1 Helmut Butzkueven,2 Kathleen Costello,3 Suhayl Dhlib-Jalburt,4 Jeremy Hobart,5 Gesela Koheli,6 George Pepper,7 Maria Pia Sormani,8 Christoph Thalheim,9 Anthony Traboulsi,10 Timothy Vollmer11

1Queen Mary University London, B MAus, Institute of Health and Life Sciences, Dental Institute, London, UK; 2Melbourne Brain Centre, Royal Melbourne Hospital, University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia; 3President, Healthcare Access, National Multiple Sclerosis Society, New York, NY; 4Department of Neurology, UK FDRGS Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, New Brunswick, USA; 5Pharmacy Faculty, Plymouth University Peninsula Schools of Medicine and Dentistry, Plymouth, UK; 6European Health Economics, Mulhouse, France; 7Shifts, Ltd, USA; 8Biostatistics Unit, University of Genoa, Genoa, Italy; 9Patient Advocate in Multiple Sclerosis, Brussels, Belgium; 10Department of Medicine, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada; 11Department of Neurology, University of Colorado Denver, Aurora, USA

Background

- Disease understanding, diagnostic criteria, treatment options and monitoring procedures in multiple sclerosis (MS) are rapidly evolving.
- Major policy changes are needed, however, in order to translate these advances into improved outcomes.
- Achieving lasting change requires the support of many groups, including patient organizations, healthcare professionals, policymakers, payers and bodies that conduct health technology appraisals (HTA).

Objectives

- To describe the development of consensus policy recommendations on diagnosis, therapeutic strategies and improving access to treatment in MS.
- To outline the strategy for global dissemination and implementation of these recommendations.

Methods

- A literature survey guided by the lead author of the report (Professor Giovanni) and supported by professional medical writers addressed:
  - Current practices in diagnosis, treatment and management.
  - Definitions of disease activity.
  - Barriers to accessing disease-modifying therapies (DMTs).
  - Personal and economic impacts of MS.
- The author group (10 authors) participated in structured consensus conferences on March 2 and May 22, 2015, reviewed and contributed to the report drafts, and approved the final report.
- The working group (14 people) participated in the second conference and contributed to the final report.

The report, Brain health time matters in multiple sclerosis, was published on October 6, 2015.

This marked the public launch of the ongoing MS Brain Health initiative (Figure 1).1

Results

Therapeutic strategy

The report recommends a clear treatment goal to preserve central nervous system tissue and maximize lifelong neurological reserve by reducing disease activity.

- A therapeutic strategy based on proactive monitoring and shared decision-making will help to achieve this. Early diagnosis, improved access to DMTs and generating real-world evidence are also key components (Figure 2).
- Enabling and promoting widespread adoption of this therapeutic strategy has the potential to improve outcomes for people with MS.

Policy recommendations

The policy recommendations that aim to facilitate the therapeutic strategy have been grouped under three overarching recommendations.

- Minimize delays in diagnosis and in the time to treatment initiation.
- Set goals for treatment and ongoing management that will optimize outcomes for all people with MS.
- Consult the most robust evidence base possible when making treatment and management decisions.

Conclusions

- Brain health: time matters in multiple sclerosis, an international consensus report published in October 2015, was developed through structured discussions with multidisciplinary authors and working groups.
- The report presents an evidence-based position for a therapeutic strategy involving proactive monitoring and shared decision-making. Early diagnosis, improved treatment access and generating real-world evidence are also key.
- The policy recommendations are aimed at a range of stakeholders who can influence the quality of care.
- The multidisciplinary composition of the author and working groups has generated a wide representation of individual and society voices.
- The authors and Steering Committee warmly welcome proactive engagement by local stakeholders who desire to see change and who can build on this momentum.

To read the full report and consensus recommendations, visit www.msbrainhealth.org

References

8 MS Brain Health. @MSBrainHealth. Available from: http://www.twitter.com/msbrainhealth
9 MS Brain Health. About the MS Brain Health initiative. Available from: http://www.msbrainhealth.org/about
10 The proportion of people with all forms of MS receiving a newer DMT in 2013 varied considerably between European countries.

Disclosures

No conflicts of interest to declare.

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