Policy recommendations

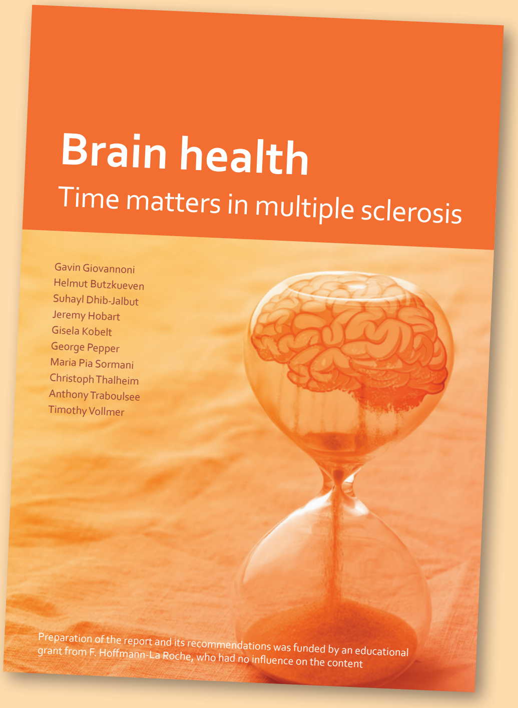
Brain health

Time matters in multiple sclerosis

Recent years have seen rapid developments in diagnostic criteria, treatment options and monitoring procedures in multiple sclerosis (MS), as well as an improved overall understanding of the disease. Major policy changes are needed, however, to translate these advances into better outcomes for people with MS and those who care for them.

A new evidence-based report, *Brain health: time matters in multiple sclerosis*, presents policy recommendations aimed at facilitating a therapeutic strategy with the potential to minimize disease activity and maximize lifelong brain health for those with MS.

The report has been developed by an international multidisciplinary group of experts and has been endorsed by professional associations and advocacy groups.



Brain health

Time matters in multiple sclerosis

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This leaflet reproduces the policy recommendations from the report *Brain health: time matters in multiple sclerosis*.

Our vision is that these recommendations will be used widely among those committed to creating a better future for people with MS and those who care for them.

The full report can be viewed at www.msbrainhealth.org

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Recommendations

Multiple sclerosis has a profound personal, social and economic impact. Better outcomes for people with MS and those who care for them can be achieved if organizations implement the following three sets of recommendations.

1. Minimize delays in the diagnosis of MS and in the time to treatment initiation as these can result in irreversible disability progression.

■ **Educate the general public to take prompt action if early symptoms of MS develop, by visiting a healthcare professional.** Awareness campaigns that highlight the typical initial symptoms, the negative impact of delaying treatment and the personal and societal costs of the disease would support this.	National bodies Patient groups
■ **Educate family and primary care physicians about the importance of promptly referring people with suspected MS to a neurologist,** and ultimately to a specialist clinic, to speed up diagnosis and treatment initiation.	National bodies Professional bodies Healthcare providers
■ **Recommend that general neurologists refer people suspected of having the disease to specialist MS neurologists.**	National bodies Professional bodies Healthcare providers
■ **Improve access to specialist care for MS:** make diagnostic and monitoring procedures more widely accessible, increase the numbers of healthcare professionals who specialize in the management of MS, and ensure that these specialists provide prompt diagnostic and support services for people with suspected MS and those who have been newly diagnosed with the disease.	National bodies Healthcare providers Reimbursement agencies
■ **Adopt the latest accepted diagnostic criteria,** in order to diagnose MS as early as possible.	National and international bodies Healthcare providers
■ **Align prescribing guidelines with the latest accepted diagnostic criteria** to give people with MS the opportunity to start treatment and receive support promptly, as soon as diagnosis is confirmed.	National bodies Healthcare providers

National bodies may include government departments or private organizations, depending on the country in question.

2. Set goals for treatment and ongoing management that aim for the best possible outcome for every person with MS.

Ensure that MS healthcare professionals can take the time to educate people with MS about strategies to manage their disease. Emphasize the importance of a 'brain-healthy' lifestyle, the benefits of early treatment with therapies that can modify the disease course, the likely consequences of inadequate or suboptimal treatment and the goal of minimizing disease activity while optimizing safety.	National bodies Professional bodies Healthcare providers
Implement a shared decision-making process that embodies dialogue between people with MS and healthcare professionals. A well-informed and proactive collaboration between people with MS and their healthcare team is vital to successful management of the disease.	National bodies Professional bodies Healthcare providers
Make the full range of disease-modifying therapies available to people with active relapsing forms of MS, regardless of their treatment history, to speed up adoption of the most appropriate treatment strategy that optimizes effectiveness and safety for each individual.	Regulatory authorities Healthcare providers Health technology assessors Reimbursement agencies
Include evidence from monitoring via regular clinical evaluation and scheduled/unscheduled MRI brain scans in any definitions of disease activity or suboptimal response, in order to assist in the rapid identification of treatment failure and the decision to switch treatment.	Healthcare providers Regulatory authorities
Ensure that MS healthcare professionals can take the time to monitor disease activity in people with MS.	National bodies Healthcare providers
Agree and implement standardized data collection techniques, protocols and data sets, nationally and internationally, to track clinical and subclinical events in routine practice. **Incorporate these into a clinical management tool** to facilitate individualized practice.	National and international bodies Healthcare providers Curators of registries and databases
Maintain treatment with a disease-modifying therapy for as long as a person with MS would be at risk of inflammatory disease activity if they were not receiving treatment; in the case of a suboptimal response, make a prompt decision about whether or not to switch therapy.	Healthcare providers Reimbursement agencies
Seek regulatory and health technology assessment approvals to implement these recommendations.	Pharmaceutical companies Professional bodies Patient groups Any other stakeholders

3. Consult the most robust evidence base possible, and generate further evidence, in order to make good decisions about therapeutic and management strategies for MS.

Carry out economic evaluations of therapies and other healthcare interventions from a societal perspective, considering the health benefits and costs to all parties, to improve assessments of true cost-effectiveness.	Health technology assessors Reimbursement agencies Patient groups
Encourage the continuing investigation, development and use of cost-effective therapeutic strategies, of approaches that reduce the costs of managing MS and of alternative financing models, to improve access to treatment.	Regulatory authorities Healthcare providers Health technology assessors Reimbursement agencies
Agree and implement standardized data collection techniques, protocols and data sets, nationally and internationally, to track clinical and subclinical events in routine practice. **Incorporate these into national and international MS registries and databases** to generate real-world evidence of the long-term effectiveness and safety of therapeutic strategies; such evidence can be used by regulatory bodies and payers, and will enable differences in practice patterns to be assessed and addressed.	National and international bodies Healthcare providers Curators of registries and databases
Ensure that access to multiple sclerosis registries and databases is available for those carrying out health technology assessments and economic evaluations.	National and international bodies Healthcare providers Curators of registries and databases

Pledge your support now

Time matters in multiple sclerosis – and you can make a difference!

Pledge your support to help to create a better future for people with MS and those who care for them. Visit **www.msbrainhealth.org**

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Time Matters

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