Conference Highlights Emerging Therapies and Treatments for MS continued from page 1

signs in spinal fluid of possible benefit, and also found slowing in the rate of brain tissue loss (atrophy). While there are some known potential adverse events related to the use of Tyasri, the investigators did not identify any new safety issues. (A large, phase III trial in people with secondary-progressive MS is underway.)

*Tertifarnib reduces relapse rate in relapsing-remitting MS*

Results of the TOWER study, the second phase III study to be completed in relapsing-remitting MS, showed that, compared to placebo, a 14-mg dose of tertifarnib reduced relapse rate by 36.3% and reduced the risk of disability progression by 51.5%. The most common adverse events included headache, liver enzyme elevations, hair thinning, diarrhea, nausea and reduction of white blood cells (neutropenia). (Abstract 153)

*New treatment approach decreases lesions in relapsing-remitting MS*

AIN457 (secukinumab) is a monoclonal antibody given by monthly IV infusion, which is being developed by Novartis. Results of a small proof-of-concept trial in 73 people with relapsing-remitting MS decreased active lesions MRI scans significantly over placebo. AIN457 neutralizes an immune messenger called interleukin-17A, which has been implicated in MS disease activity. A follow-up clinical trial is planned.

In addition to reporting on treatment options and clinical trials, the conference also included news about research into the underlying processes involved in MS, risk factors for the disease, myelin and nervous system repair, and rehabilitation.

* Source: National MS Society, USA

Check out the MS Research Portal

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There was particularly good news for people living with progressive MS, who can look forward to more clinical trials of treatments aimed at slowing the progression of their disease.

We’ve outlined a few of the conference highlights below, which we hope will give you a renewed sense of optimism and purpose in the fight to treat, and ultimately cure, MS.

• **Statin slows clinical progression in secondary-progressive MS**

   A phase II, two-year study of high-dose simvastatin (a therapy for high cholesterol) involving 140 people with secondary-progressive MS showed the possibility that this drug may protect against nervous system damage. People in the study who took 80mg of simvastatin, versus those who took placebo, showed nearly 40% less brain volume reduction (atrophy), and also had slower clinical progression.

• **Tysabri impacts brain tissue loss in progressive MS**

   A research team presented results from a small, unblinded clinical trial of Tysabri® (natalizumab, Biogen Idec and Elan) infusions in 24 people with primary-progressive MS or secondary-progressive MS. In 17 people who completed the study, they found

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MS in the News

Decreased hospital admissions for patients with MS

A recent retrospective study conducted in British Columbia shows that hospital admissions for MS have decreased over the past 20 years, but the length of stay has increased. Higher admission rates and longer stays were associated with older age, the presence of a primary progressive disease course, and a longer disease duration. The length of hospital stays increased over the study period, averaging 10 days for all inpatient admission and 13 days if the admission was MS-related.

This study highlights many changes in the management of MS over the past 20 years, including the treatment of MS relapses on an outpatient basis.


Early relapses may not influence time to secondary progressive onset

A team of researchers investigated the relationship between early relapses (within the first two years), secondary progression and late disability in MS. They suggest that the total number of early relapses in the relapsing-remitting phase does not influence the time to secondary progressive onset.

Supported in part by the MS Society of Canada, the study examined 730 patient records of people with relapsing-remitting MS from the London Multiple Sclerosis Clinic in Ontario from 1972-2000.


Keeping the Volunteer Spirit Alive

Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Award Honouree, Audrey Wheeler

Not everyone has the commitment to service that characterizes our dear friend, Audrey Wheeler. This high-energy lady has been volunteering for the MS Society for more than 20 years! Her interest in helping her neighbours with MS began close to home, when her sister was diagnosed with the disease. After joining the MS Society of Canada in 1961, she began volunteering as she neared retirement age, serving as a city captain for our vital Curnation Campaign.

When Audrey finally did retire in 1994, she was ready to take on an even greater role, joining us as an office volunteer to contribute her time and efforts to the MS Society. For the many people with MS who have come to know Audrey, she has been the face of the MS Society. And for those who worked alongside her, she is quite simply, an inspiration.

We Love Our Volunteers! National Volunteer Week is April 21-27, 2013

Across Canada, more than 13.3 million people give of their time and their passion to make positive change in their communities. During this special week, we thank the volunteers who make it possible for the MS Society to help so many Canadians with MS.

If you’re not yet a volunteer, this is a great time to consider becoming one!

You could join our Family & Friends and Neighbourhood Drive to help spread the word about MS and raise funds for vital research.
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Multiple Sclerosis Scientific Research Foundation (MSSRF) funds cutting-edge Canadian Collaborative Project on Genetic Susceptibility in MS for $4.7 million.

Health Canada approves Betaseron® (interferon beta-1a) as a treatment for secondary-progressive MS to slow the progression of disability and to reduce the frequency of MS attacks.

Link between vitamin D and reduced risk of MS identified.

MSSRF funds groundbreaking study of psoralen MS for $4.3 million.

Health Canada approves Gilenya® ( fingolimod) capsules, the first oral therapy developed for relapsing-remitting MS.
Spring Events

World MS Day is May 29.

Last year, World MS Day was commemorated by more than 73 countries around the world. Go to mssociety.ca to learn how Canada will be honouring this special occasion.

Show your support – Wear a carnation.

This May, volunteers across Canada are showing their dedication to finding a cure by selling carnations on street corners, malls and other public spaces. If you can, please help raise awareness about multiple sclerosis by purchasing a carnation.

MS Walk: Every step matters.

This spring, walk to help change lives for the better – beginning right where you live. Your participation will help fund innovative programs in your community and support groundbreaking research dedicated to finding a cure. Visit mswalk.ca for more information.

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* Source: National MS Society, USA

A Message from the President

It’s always a pleasure for me to report good news to donors and friends in the MS community. This means that my message today is one that will be particularly enjoyable to deliver.

The fact is, after attending dozens of presentations at the ECTRIMS Conference, many of them from the greatest talents in MS research, we have far more reason than ever to be hopeful about the future.

Scientists and researchers reported on advances in the areas of myelin repair, possible immune targets in MS, new therapies designed to restore function, and enhancements in our understanding of what causes MS.

Perhaps most importantly, the conference presented a number of new therapeutic options for those living with relapsing-remitting MS and bold new insights into our understanding of progressive MS. This gives hope to the estimated 55,000 to 75,000 Canadians who live with MS.

As a supporter of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, you play such an important role in our journey toward the end of MS. Thanks to you, we are leading the way forward.

On behalf of all of us at the MS Society, I am deeply grateful for your efforts to help us take the next step on this journey. We cannot advance without you, and your continued support is critical to us.

Thank you.

Yves Savoie
President and Chief Executive Officer
Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada

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