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## **Time Matters in Multiple Sclerosis – International Consensus Policy Recommendations On Diagnosis, Management and Treatment Access**

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Objective: Disease understanding, diagnostic criteria, treatment options and monitoring procedures are rapidly evolving, as acknowledged by recent local clinical guidelines [1]. We present consensus policy recommendations from an international, multidisciplinary group on diagnosis, therapeutic strategies and improving access to treatment in multiple sclerosis.

Design & Method: Structured discussions in 2015 examined the personal and economic impact of multiple sclerosis, current practice in diagnosis, treatment and management, definitions of disease activity and barriers to accessing disease-modifying therapies.

Result: We recommend a clear treatment goal: to preserve central nervous system tissue and maximize long-term brain health by reducing disease activity. Delays often occur before a person with symptoms suggestive of multiple sclerosis sees a neurologist. Campaigns to raise awareness of multiple sclerosis and initiatives to improve access to specialist healthcare professionals and services are needed. Treatment should start early, with a disease-modifying therapy and lifestyle measures. All parameters that predict relapses and disability progression should be included in the definition of disease activity and monitored regularly when practical. On suboptimal control of disease activity, switching to a disease-modifying therapy with a different mechanism of action should be considered. A shared decision-making process that considers all appropriate disease-modifying therapies should be implemented. Data from monitoring should be recorded in registries to generate real-world evidence. In many jurisdictions, access to disease-modifying therapies is limited. To improve treatment access, the relevant bodies should consider all costs to all parties when conducting economic evaluations and encourage the continuing investigation, development and use of cost-effective therapeutic strategies and alternative financing models.

Conclusion: The consensus findings of an international author group recommend a therapeutic strategy based on proactive monitoring and shared decision-making in multiple sclerosis. Early diagnosis and improved treatment access are also key components.