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October 2020 Newsletter

Offering support, care, and hope...*right here at home!*

All Support Group Meetings and Newsletter Folding are Cancelled Until Further Notice!

We are continuing to work behind the scenes to make sure the telephone calls, emails, and office needs are being handled. It is important to us that we provide up-to-date information on our website and Facebook page for you. Please stay home, stay safe, and stay well!

Send your email address to officemanager@tristatems.org to receive newsletters and programs!

The Mission of the Tri-State Multiple Sclerosis Association is to enhance the quality of life for individuals living with MS & their families in Southern IN, Southern IL & Western KY


Time to Get Your Flu Shot

Susan Reynolds RN, MSCN

***October is the time to get your flu shot.** I have already had my new shingles vaccine and flu vaccine. This year, vaccinations are more important than ever.

The CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone 6 months of age and older as the first, and most important, step in protecting against the flu. While there are many different flu viruses, the flu vaccine is designed to protect against the three main flu strains that research indicates will cause the most illness during the flu season. Getting the flu vaccine as soon as it becomes available each year is always a good idea, and the protection you get from vaccination will last throughout the flu season.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has even posted a large notice on the top of its ‘Key Facts About Seasonal Flu’ web page:

 Getting a flu vaccine is more important than ever during 2020-2021 to protect yourself and the people around you from flu, and to help reduce the strain on healthcare systems responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

(Screenshot via [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov))

Last year, the American Academy of Neurology (AAN) updated its flu vaccine guidelines, making it clear that, with very few exceptions, the benefits of flu and other vaccines for people with MS far outweigh any risks. But, the AAN guidelines caution:

A flu shot may not work as well as expected for some people who are receiving particular disease-modifying treatments, such as Gilenya, Copaxone, and Novantrone.

MS patients should delay scheduling a vaccination during a relapse to avoid the possibility that the vaccine might trigger complications. Do not use the nasal spray flu vaccine FluMist, as it contains a “live, attenuated” virus, which isn’t recommended for people with MS.

The CDC says that getting vaccinated against the flu is particularly important for people who are considered at high risk for flu complications. Those with a neurological disorder or weakened immune system are included in this high-risk group. Some MS disease-modifying therapies compromise the immune system.

Precautions that we all need to take. Preventative measures are your first line of defense. The best way to protect yourself from COVID-19 and the flu is to practice good hygiene and to make these CDC recommendations part of your routine:

- *Wash your hands often* with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people outside of your home. (see below)
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow, rather than into your hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Wear a Cloth Face Mask. (We are already doing this for the coronavirus.) This is especially encouraged in situations where social distancing is difficult to maintain (such as grocery store or pharmacy) and in areas of significant community-based transmission. According to the CDC, studies have shown that an individual with the novel coronavirus and/or the flu could be asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic, promoting them to make this new recommendation. It's important to note that it does not replace social distancing recommendations.

Avoid Close Contact. Social distancing remains a key way to mitigate spread of COVID-19, and the same things apply with the flu. The CDC recommends maintaining a distance of approximately *6 feet* from others in public places, since respiratory droplets produced by coughing or sneezing do not travel more than 6 feet.

Call Your Doctor. The only way to know if you actually have the flu is with a respiratory specimen taken in the first four to five days. The specimen would be sent to a lab by your doctor. The important thing is to call your doctor if you think you have the flu. Prescription anti-viral drugs are available and can lessen the severity of your illness if started immediately. Tamiflu and Relenza are two of the antiviral drugs commonly prescribed for flu. Call your doctor very early after you begin having symptoms to get any benefit from taking these antiviral prescriptions.

Please talk to your Neurologist before getting the flu vaccine.

U.S. Food and Drug Administration Approves Bristol Myers Squibb's ZEPOSIA® (ozanimod), a New Oral Treatment for Relapsing Forms of Multiple Sclerosis

In clinical trials, ZEPOSIA demonstrated efficacy on a key clinical marker of disease activity annualized relapse rate (ARR) – as compared to AVONEX® (interferon beta-1a). ZEPOSIA requires no label-based first dose observation. ZEPOSIA adds to Bristol Myers Squibb's legacy immunology franchise and marks the first FDA-approved New Drug Application since the Celgene acquisition. Approval date: March 25, 2020.

ZEPOSIA is a drug used for the treatment of adults with relapsing forms of multiple sclerosis (RMS) including clinically isolated syndrome and active secondary progressive MS.

ZEPOSIA is a capsule taken by mouth once daily. ZEPOSIA is initially started at a low dose and then slowly increased over the first week.

ZEPOSIA was better in reducing the risk of disease relapse in comparison to interferon β 1a, a product approved for the treatment of relapsing forms of MS.

Were there any differences in how well it works among sex, race, and age?

- Sex: ZEPOSIA worked similarly in men and women.
- Race: The majority of patients were white. The number of patients in other races was limited; therefore, differences in how well ZEPOSIA worked among races could not be determined.
- Age: ZEPOSIA worked similarly in patients younger and older than 40 years of age.

ZEPOSIA may cause serious side effects, including life threatening infections, decreased heart rate, liver injury, increased blood pressure, decreased lung function, and build-up of fluid in the back of the eye (macular edema).

Common side effects of ZEPOSIA include upper respiratory infections, increased liver enzymes, blood pressure drop upon standing, urinary tract infection, back pain and high blood pressure.

Were there any differences in side effects among sex, race and age?

- Sex: The occurrence of side effects was similar in men and women.
- Race: The majority of patients were white. The number of patients in other races was limited; therefore, differences in the occurrence of side effects among races could not be determined.
- Age: The occurrence of side effects was similar in patients younger and older than 40 years old.

The FDA approved ZEPOSIA based on evidence from two clinical trials (Trial 1/NCT 02294058 and Trial 2/ NCT02047734) of 1,767 patients with RMS. The trials were conducted at 173 centers in the United States, Belarus, Poland, Russia, and Ukraine.

The benefits and side effects of ZEPOSIA were evaluated in two clinical trials of patients with relapsing forms of MS. Patients received ZEPOSIA or comparator (interferon β 1a, a product approved for the treatment of relapsing forms of MS) for up to one year (in Trial 1) or up to 2 years (in Trial 2). Neither the patients nor the health care providers knew which treatment was being given until the trials were completed.

Bristol Myers Squibb announced it will delay commercialization of the drug as the US healthcare system continues to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. "The company made the decision based on what's in the best health interest of our patients, customers, and employees. Bristol Myers Squibb will continue to monitor the environment and will partner with the neurology community to inform launch timing," they note in a press release announcing the approval.

Information on ZEPOSIA from www.fda.gov.

Bristol Myers Squibb will sponsor an upcoming webinar about ZEPOSIA:

The What's Next for MS Event Series

Presenter: Doug Jeffery, MD; Lake Norman Neurology at Piedmont Health

Date / Time: Thursday, October 8, 2020; 6:00 p.m.

Registration: zeposia.com/relapsing-ms-events/

MS Webinars for October

Losing Connection: Difficult Discussions in a Virtual World – Sponsor: MSAA

Presenters: Mitzi Joi Williams, MD and Gavin Giovannoni, MBBCh, PhD, FCP, along with Stanca, MS patient advocate / founder of the MSmile Centre.

Date / Time: Monday, October 9, 2020; 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Interactive, timely webinar on the best strategies for communicating in a virtual world with your MS healthcare professional team. Explore how best to communicate difficult conversation topics.

Registration: mysaa.org. Select the program under ‘Education Programs’ to register.

Bowel & Bladder Symptoms - Sponsor: Can Do MS

Presenters: Tracy Walker, NP, WOC, Shepherd Center / Lindie Schreiner, PTA - Physical Therapy Assistant, Horizon Rehabilitation Centers

Date / Time: Tuesday, October 13, 2020; 7:00 p.m. - 8:15 p.m.

Tracy and Lindie will discuss how MS can affect bowel & bladder function and offer strategies to manage these common symptoms, including pelvic floor training.

Registration: cando-ms.org

Webinars Sponsored by Biogen

The Above MS (Biogen) website lists many webinars presented by Doctors or Nurse Practitioners who are experts in the field of MS. Early evening webinars are scheduled most days in October.

Topics include: Importance of a Proven Treatment; Understanding Your MS; Looking for a Therapy That’s Right For You?; Let’s Talk Relapsing MS: Biogen Support Services; and Take Charge and Learn More about MS in African Americans.

To search for webinars, and registration, visit: abovems.com. Click on MS support and events.

Webinars Sponsored by MS Views and News

Update in MS Today in Underserved Communities: Statistics, Barriers to Treatment and Management, Plus More About COVID and MS

Presenter: Mitzi Joi Williams, MD, MS Neurologist

Date / Time: Tuesday, October 6, 2020; 6:00 p.m.

Registration: msviews.org

2020 MS Symposium

Presenters: Ben Thrower MD, MS Neurologist; Mitzi Joi Williams MD, MS Neurologist; Paul Pelland, MS patient advocate; Rick Harris Psy D Psychologist; Aaron Boster MD, MS Neuroimmunologist

Date / Time: Saturday, October 17, 2020; 9:00 a.m. - 12:40 p.m.

Registration: msviews.org

Brain Health - Understanding Neurological Brain Reserve, What Research Has Learned About the Brain Today, Lesions, and Impact of Healthy Lifestyle Choices

Presenter: Megan Weigel DNP, ARNP-c, APHN-c, MSCN

Date / Time: Tuesday, October 20, 2020; 7:00 p.m.

Registration: msviews.org