Integrated Approach to Managing Multiple Sclerosis Could Help Improve the Quality of MS Care, Survey Finds
National MS Society and Teva Neuroscience Release MS Trend Report

Individuals living with multiple sclerosis could more effectively manage their disease through greater collaboration and more efficient disease management involving managed care organizations, neurologists, and specialty pharmacies, a landmark study has found. The National Multiple Sclerosis Society and Teva Neuroscience partnered on the new *Multiple Sclerosis Trend Report: Perspectives from Managed Care, Providers, and Patients* involving healthcare professionals, MS patients, and managed care professionals.

**Early treatment and patient adherence to that treatment are essential** in slowing the progression of multiple sclerosis and managing its symptoms. But the *Report* found many significant obstacles to optimal disease management — denials of prescribed drugs and time-consuming appeals, referrals to specialists, lack of MS-specific patient information, insurer ignorance about the differences between MS disease-modifying therapies and drugs that treat MS-related symptoms, and high co-payments and deductibles.

The *Report* found that the managed care industry does not fully comprehend MS as a life-changing, chronic disease, and often does not allow doctors to treat it properly. And it found that **neurologists are shouldering much of the burden** of prior authorizations, payment issues, claims appeals, and other issues — and are becoming discouraged to point of avoiding MS patients.

**Solutions to these obstacles need to be integrated and efficient**, involving greater communication and collaboration among MCOs, neurologists, and specialty pharmacies. It would ease the burden on neurologists, capitalize on the expertise of specialty pharmacies, and help people living with MS to delay progression of the disease, save money, sustain their economic and professional contributions, and have a better quality of life. Diagnosing MS more quickly, starting treatment sooner, ensuring drug adherence, and better managing the disease could reduce costs for MCOs in the long run, because these changes could help to delay progression (especially as new, expensive MS drugs are introduced).

According to the *Report*, **specialty pharmacies are playing an ever-increasing role in this solution — managing and dispensing medication** for rare and chronic diseases, such as MS. They supply drugs directly to patients and provide a more intensive level of patient contact and attention. In providing education on medication usage, side effects, disease progression, and reimbursement to this comparatively well-educated patient sector, specialty pharmacies aim to address barriers to successful MS therapy. They also provide management programs for payers and manufacturers, including prior authorization and strategies for maximizing patient compliance and adherence. Those companies have the potential to influence adherence to MS therapies, provide patient education, improve the management of MS, and provide costs savings in MS patient care.
Supporting Results:

- Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of MS patient respondents said their health insurer does not offer a disease management program for MS. Yet, MS patients said they would **welcome the development of a disease management program**, as one-quarter of respondents clearly appreciate the benefits of such programs. In fact, MS patients cited the availability of a disease management program as a reason for satisfaction with current insurers. That could lead insurers to approve more prescriptions and tests, and even reduce costs for MCOs in the long term, when treatment of more progressed MS is more costly.

- **Collaboration among other providers** allows for efficiencies and can benefit patients. Case managers are more intently focused on advancing patient education, according to the Report, and opening more pathways of communication. As a result, MS patients are asking for therapies by brand name and therefore could have a greater rate of adherence to those drugs.

- Many neurologists (59 percent of respondents) indicated barriers to diagnosing and treating MS in their practices — primarily economic concerns, clinical issues, and difficulties with insurance carriers — interfere with more effective management of the disease. In fact, 64 percent of neurologists surveyed would **prefer not to take on more MS patients**. More than two-thirds would welcome a specialty pharmacy program to assist in managing MS treatment.

- Nearly all specialty pharmacy respondents (95 percent) said they believe **specialty pharmacies can add value** to and enhance the ways in which MS specialists and neurologists deliver care to MS patients, given the multitude of services that they offer.

- Case managers reported many barriers to care for MS patients — 65 percent of case managers cited cost and 54 percent cited approval by payers. Communication among healthcare professionals and with patients could help better educate them on the process. **Education also helps increase adherence.** And adherence to the prescribed MS therapy could help lead to a delay in disease progression. That gives patients what they want — better quality of life and continued employment.

- **Employment and quality of life — and the relationship between the two — are among the top concerns of patients with MS today.** The patient survey highlighted the dilemma of more than two-fifths (43 percent) of MS patients who leave the workforce owing to the progression of their disease or to symptoms such as fatigue that prevent them from sustaining full-time jobs.