

28 April 2023

Dear WHO Expert Committee on Essential Medicines,

Re: Proposal for inclusion of Multiple Sclerosis Disease-Modifying Therapies on the WHO essential medicines list; A.10 Cladribine, glatiramer, and rituximab – multiple sclerosis – EML

Established in 2022, the National MS Society of the UAE (NMSS) provides support and resources for people living with MS in the UAE. NMSS works with local and international partners to improve diagnosis and access to treatment, and ultimately to find a cure. NMSS supports efforts to better understand the state of MS in the UAE and in the MENA region through improved collection of data on MS locally, research on prevalence and progression of MS in the local and regional population, and support for breakthrough treatments for MS.

NMSS advocates for better access to treatment for all people living with MS in the UAE, MENA region and globally. Left untreated, MS is a progressively disabling disease in the majority. At a time when MS prevalence rates are rising in the MENA region, early diagnosis and access to effective, affordable treatments are critical for people living with MS in our region. While most FDA and EMA approved DMTs are available for use in the UAE and many GCC countries, we are acutely aware that many people living with MS in some MENA countries are not as fortunate, especially in resource-limited settings.

Inclusion in the WHO EML list is associated with increased availability and reimbursement of therapies across the globe. It is high time that these 3 disease modifying therapies (DMTs) with different routes of administration, efficacy and tolerability are now being included. They are amongst the safest and most cost-effective medicines available in their respective categories. Their inclusion in the EML will undoubtedly help increase access of people with MS to high quality evidence-based treatments.

The UAE is committed to providing a range of treatments for MS as part of the standard of care, including well-established DMTs along with Hematopoietic stem cell transplantation (HSCT). The UAE has made all DMTs available domestically while also making great strides in building domestic capabilities to offer HSCT, in accordance with American and European guidelines. In a demonstration of this commitment and in partnership with NMSS, the UAE government is now providing this highly effective stem cell-based therapy for international patients at affordable prices.

The National MS Society of the UAE joins with MSIF and other international partners to support the call for the inclusion of A.10 Cladribine, glatiramer, and rituximab in the WHO's Essential Medicines List and for better access to disease modifying therapies for all people living with MS globally.

Sincerely,



Dr. Fatima Al Kaabi

Vice-Chair, UAE National MS Society

Executive Director, Bone Marrow Transplant Program at Abu Dhabi Stem Cell Center