



Biogen Idec Launches Women in MS Educational Initiative

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--Educational Forum Tailored for Female Healthcare Professionals Addresses Gender Issues in MS--

WESTON, Mass.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--[Biogen Idec](#) (NASDAQ: BILB) today announced the launch of "Women in MS," an educational initiative to address both the advantages and challenges female clinicians experience in treating patients living with multiple sclerosis (MS). The program includes a series of local seminars held throughout 2011 that feature female healthcare professionals at the forefront of MS research and treatment, as well as a mentor matching service to enable ongoing participant networking. The inaugural seminar, "Breaking the News," will take place on May 24, 2011 in Seattle and will be broadcast live to venues in Seattle, San Diego, Los Angeles, and Phoenix.

"Receiving a chronic disease diagnosis, like MS, can trigger strong emotions and significantly impact patients' families, careers, and social lives. To help patients cope with this uncertainty and change, physicians need to engage in frank and earnest discussions with their patients at the time of diagnosis," said Dr. Mariko Kita, Director, Virginia Mason Multiple Sclerosis Center and seminar presenter. "Gender and communication styles can influence these important patient-physician relationships."

The "Breaking the News" meeting will include presentations from Dr. Kita and Dr. Darcy Cox, Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, University of British Columbia, as well as a firsthand patient account of receiving, mentally processing, and managing a MS diagnosis. There will also be a question and answer session with the panel. The program format is designed to provide female clinicians a holistic perspective on a MS diagnosis; offer an opportunity for discussion around techniques to support patients in understanding and communicating their diagnosis; and review the role of AVONEX, a therapeutic option with 15 years of patient experience, in the clinical management of newly diagnosed patients. Three additional meetings are planned for 2011.

"As clinicians, it is paramount that we recognize the complexities of communicating with our patients and ensure they receive access to comprehensive support services," said Dr. Cox. "The 'Women in MS' initiative is a forum to share and strengthen our resource network."

"The goal of the 'Women in MS' initiative is to identify gender-related communication gaps and unmet resource needs, and provide opportunities for clinicians to begin developing and initiating solutions," said Dr. Nancy Richert, Senior Fellow at Biogen Idec. "As a leader in MS treatment for more than 15 years, we are proud to be partnering with treating clinicians on this unique initiative to help drive excellence in MS care."

Biogen Idec contracted with Dr. Mariko Kita, Dr. Darcy Cox, and the local patient to participate as presenters in the "Women in MS: Breaking the News" seminar.

About Healthcare Provider-Patient Communication in MS

Studies indicate that gender influences patient-physician communication.¹ In MS, the dynamics of the disease course, patient population, and physician landscape elevate the importance of gender considerations in patient-physician communication. MS is a chronic neurological disorder with no known cure. Patients may experience an unpredictable pattern of symptoms including walking, balancing and coordination problems; vision problems; fatigue; impaired cognitive function; and pain,² and therefore should maintain regular, ongoing communication with their neurologists. Additionally, while research suggests MS is two to three times more common in women,³ fewer than 30 percent of the active, board certified members of the American Academy of Neurology are female.⁴ Efforts to explore the unique role of female neurologists may help improve care and communication for both male and female MS patients.

About Biogen Idec

Biogen Idec uses cutting edge science to discover, develop, manufacture, and market therapies for the treatment of serious diseases with a focus on neurological disorders. Founded in 1978, Biogen Idec is the world's oldest independent biotechnology company. Patients worldwide benefit from its leading multiple sclerosis therapies and the company generates more than \$4 billion in annual revenues. For product labeling, press releases and additional information about the company, please visit www.biogenidec.com.

About AVONEX

AVONEX is one of the most prescribed treatments for relapsing forms of MS worldwide. It is used worldwide as a treatment for relapsing forms of MS to slow the progression of physical disability and reduce relapses. AVONEX is also approved for patients who have their first clinical MS attack and have a brain MRI scan consistent with MS.

The most common side effects associated with AVONEX MS treatment are flu-like symptoms, including myalgia, fever, fatigue, headache, chills, nausea, vomiting, pain and asthenia.

AVONEX should be used with caution in patients with depression or other mood disorders and in patients with seizure disorders. AVONEX should not be used by pregnant women.

Patients with cardiac disease should be closely monitored. Patients should also be monitored for signs of hepatic injury. Routine periodic blood chemistry and hematology tests are recommended during treatment with AVONEX. Rare cases of anaphylaxis have been reported.

For information regarding the European Summary of Product Characteristics visit <http://www.ema.europa.eu/ema>. For the complete United States prescribing information, please visit <http://www.AVONEX.com>.

¹ Roter DL et al. *JAMA*. 2002;288:756-764.

² National Multiple Sclerosis Society: Symptoms. Available at <http://www.nationalmssociety.org/about-multiple-sclerosis/what-we-know-about->

[ms/symptoms/index.aspx](#)

³ National Multiple Sclerosis Society: Who Gets MS? Available at <http://www.nationalmssociety.org/about-multiple-sclerosis/what-we-know-about-ms/who-gets-ms/index.aspx>

⁴ American Academy of Neurology Membership by Member Type. Available at <http://www.aan.com/globals/axon/assets/8167.pdf>

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