Foreword

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Welcome to the 2014 Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Experts Summit. We were delighted to have the opportunity to chair this annual event which brought together more than 250 MS specialists from around Europe.

The central theme of this year's meeting was '*Challenges in the MS patient overall management*' which reflects not only the complex nature and diverse presentation of MS in terms of disease progression and severity, but also the difficulties faced by physicians when managing the underlying disease and associated symptoms. MS is a multisymptomatic chronic disease that demands a holistic approach to patient care. Management invariably requires the involvement of multiple medical specialties along with support from family/friends and caregivers.

The MS Experts Summit was designed to provide participants with the opportunity to learn from esteemed experts in the field of MS patient management and to share personal experiences in this demanding clinical setting. The scientific program covered a broad range of topics of current interest to MS specialists. The nature of the meeting, which combined plenary sessions with interactive workshops and clinical case review sessions, provided sufficient variety to cater for individual interests and plenty of opportunity for participation. This year's event also featured an update on activities of the European MS Platform (EMSP), an umbrella organization of national patients' societies representing the interests of more than 600,000 individuals with MS across Europe.

Some highlights of the 2-day meeting are as follows:

Improving our Understanding of MS Disease

A better understanding of the different MS subtypes has led to a new classification approach for MS based around disease activity (clinical relapse rate and magnetic resonance imaging findings) and disease progression.

The introduction of several new disease-modifying treatments over the past few years has led to more therapeutic options for MS patients while challenging treatment algorithms to 'keep up' with progress.

The development of a pan-European platform for systematic analysis of longitudinal data collected on MS patients at a national level via registries and databases is expected to provide valuable insight into the disease (epidemiology, care provision, etc) and, ideally, underpin a shift towards greater equality of care for patients with MS across Europe.

Sharing the Latest Clinical Experience Across Europe in MS Symptoms Management

Patients with treatment-resistant MS spasticity represent a particular therapeutic challenge and need to be identified and managed with the best available therapies. Best approaches for managing MS spasticity and associated symptoms were examined by reviewing evidence from clinical studies (controlled and observational) and through the interactive presentation of clinical case re-

views. Keeping up to date with new therapeutic approaches, including better ways to use currently available therapies, is key to improving our MS spasticity management skills.

Shared Approaches to Better Meet the Diverse Needs of Patients with MS

In many countries, specialized MS units have been established in which multidisciplinary teams combine resource and expertise to meet the far-reaching needs of patients with MS. Specialists in neuro-rehabilitation, neuropsychology, neuro-ophthalmology and MS pain from France, Spain and Germany provided valuable insight into their specific area of expertise.

Increased knowledge about the clinical course of MS during and after pregnancy has changed perceptions and women with MS are no longer discouraged from becoming pregnant. Nevertheless, close attention must be paid

to the safety aspects of current MS medications during conception/pregnancy and in the post-partum period.

And finally, MS Societies and Patient Associations play an important role in providing a voice for MS patients. The European MS Platform has numerous projects underway to advance the rights of individuals with MS and to ensure their full and effective participation in society.

The aims of the 2014 MS Experts Summit were set high and attendees were challenged to participate and share their experiences; however, such challenges are minor compared with those faced on a daily basis by patients with MS. We hope that everyone involved in the MS field will benefit from the Supplement and find within it useful and practical information that can assist in research and in the everyday management of MS patients.

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