

News Articles Related to MS

Tuesday, September 12, 2006

Trial Shows Risk of Developing Multiple Sclerosis Significantly Reduced with Interferon Beta-1b Early Treatment

The following comes from a recent press release from the Ottawa Hospital. "Researchers have found that treatment of patients with interferon beta-1b after a first attack suggestive of multiple sclerosis (MS) cuts their risk of developing the disease in half over the next two years, according to results from the BENEFIT clinical trial. In the BENEFIT study, over 85 percent of those patients who did not receive the therapy but were on a placebo went on to meet current diagnostic criteria for MS by either developing new MRI lesions or experiencing another clinical attack within two years of having their first clinical event. In contrast, patients who received the interferon beta-1b therapy were two times better protected against developing MS."

DIRECT-MS Comments

The above news was taken from a news release by Ottawa Hospital and is a classic example of the misleading information being put out by institutions which receive large sums of money from pharmaceutical companies, in this case Schering AG. An examination of the published article which discusses the results of this clinical trial revealed that indeed 85% of those receiving a placebo went on to meet current diagnostic criteria for MS as reported. However the article also reports that 69% of those on Betaseron also went on to meet the current diagnostic criteria. Thus the title of the news release and the statements on the risk reduction for MS onset are both inaccurate and misleading.

The real risk reduction as reported in the paper is 16%. Furthermore it appears that treatment with Betaseron will delay disease progression by about 1 year. Thus a person with MS who elects to use Betaseron may not need a walker for 11 years instead of 10. The big question is whether or not such a minor improvement is worth all the drug side effects and financial costs experienced over the 11 years.

