



## Making Decisions To Manage MS

(NAPSA)—When 24-year-old hockey star Jordan Sigalet first heard the words “You have MS,” he was scared. With no cure currently available for multiple sclerosis (MS), a chronic and often unpredictable disease of the central nervous system, Jordan knew that if he wanted to fulfill his dream of playing professional hockey, he would need to start a new type of training—not for hockey but for managing his MS.

According to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, about 400,000 people in the U.S. like Jordan have been diagnosed with MS. While this news can be extremely difficult to accept, people with MS are quickly faced with a treatment decision that will significantly impact their lives immediately, and perhaps more critically in the long-term.

However, since a newer MS treatment was voluntarily withdrawn from the market in early 2005 due to concerns with side effects, many people are questioning the benefits of treatment in general and their choice of treatment in particular.

### Why Treat MS?

A study shows that half of all people with relapsing forms of MS develop more progressive forms of MS within 10 years if left untreated. Yet, only 20 percent of patients evaluated progressed to worsening MS when treated with high-dose interferon for seven to eight years. Additional studies have shown the importance of starting treatment immediately after being diagnosed, in order to improve long-term outcomes and slow the progression of MS.

### Finding the Right Therapy

Most physicians agree that effectiveness is an important factor in choosing an MS therapy. According to guidelines developed by the American Academy of Neurology and the Advisory Council of the National MS Society, people with MS should choose a therapy based on several important factors related to efficacy:

- Ability to reduce the number of relapses
- Ability to reduce brain lesions

If you or someone you love has been diagnosed with MS, ask your doctor or health care provider the following questions about your therapy:

- How well does this therapy reduce MRI area and activity, relapses and disability progression?
- Which therapy is more effective?
- What type of injection is it (into the skin or into the muscle)? How often do I take it?
- Has it demonstrated long-term safety?
- What are the side effects?

MS LifeLines™ Ambassadors serve as an example and resource in the MS community by providing guidance, support and empowerment about living well with MS.

Another resource for people living with MS is MS LifeLines™, an educational support service offering information, tips for healthy living, access to others living with MS, and reimbursement information support. MS LifeLines™, provided by Serono and Pfizer, can be reached at 877-447-3243 or on the Web at [www.MSLifeLines.com](http://www.MSLifeLines.com). 

- Ability to slow the progression of disability

There are currently three interferon therapies available and one non-interferon therapy for patients with relapsing forms of MS. Interferon is a naturally occurring protein in the body that helps fight disease, and the interferon therapies were developed to resemble this natural substance.

It is difficult to compare MS therapies. One study, called the EVIDENCE trial, compared two interferon therapies, Rebif® and Avonex® (both interferon beta-1a).

Rebif is injected subcutaneously (into the skin) three times a week at a dose of 44 mcg, and Avonex is injected intramuscularly (into the muscle) once a week at a dose of 30 mcg. The study found that Rebif was more effective than Avonex at preventing relapses and reducing brain lesions measured on MRI scans at 48 weeks and through an average of 64 weeks. (The exact relationship between MRI findings and the clinical status of patients is unknown.)

In fact, the findings of this

study helped in the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval of Rebif. This action overcame a special designation (Orphan Drug Exclusivity Status) that had previously allowed Avonex to be the only interferon beta-1a available for patients unless there was another interferon beta therapy proven either to be safer or to work better. Rebif 44 mcg was proven to work better than Avonex 30 mcg at reducing the frequency of relapses at 24 and 48 weeks.

“My goal in treating patients is to help them maintain function for as long as possible. Finding the right therapy is very important. I always educate my patients about the clinical data and encourage them to make their therapy decision based on the facts,” says Barry Singer, MD, a practicing neurologist at Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis. “For many of my patients, high-dose, high-frequency interferon, like Rebif, is the right option to effectively help slow the progression of MS.”

Recent improvements including Rebiject II™ autoinjector, a Titration Pack and a 29-gauge needle—the thinnest needle of any MS therapy—are designed to make Rebif injections easier for patients.

Jordan worked closely with his physician to find the right treatment. “The best decision I made was getting on medication right away. I started taking Rebif a couple of months after I was diagnosed and I’m happy with my decision. I’m glad to be on a medication that is proven to slow the disease progress.”

As with any treatment, Rebif and the other available MS therapies can have some side effects. The most common side effects of Rebif include flu-like symptoms and injection-site reactions. Most side effects are mild and manageable. Side effects for Rebif were comparable to Avonex with a few exceptions.

Today, Jordan continues to pursue his hockey career and was recently signed by the Boston Bruins. He also takes his energy on the road as an MS LifeLines™ Ambassador to help educate others living with MS.

*This content was provided by Serono, Inc. and Pfizer Inc, co-promoters for Rebif (interferon beta-1a).*

*Rebif is used to treat relapsing forms of MS to decrease the frequency of relapses and delay the occurrence of some of the physical disability that is common in people with MS.*

*Before beginning treatment, patients should discuss with their doctor the potential benefits and risks associated with Rebif. Let your doctor know if you have a history of depression, seizures, liver disease, thyroid problems, and blood count or bleeding problems or if you have had previous allergic reactions to medications. Tell your doctor about all medicines you take, including prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamins and herbal supplements. Rebif and other medicines may affect each other, causing serious side effects. Talk to your doctor before you take any new medicines. Rebif is not recommended for women who are or plan to become pregnant.*

*Potential serious side effects of Rebif include depression, liver problems, risk to pregnancy, injection-site problems and severe allergic reactions. Allergic reactions are rare and may be associated with difficulty breathing and loss of consciousness, which requires immediate medical attention. The most common side effects with Rebif are injection-site reactions, flu-like symptoms (fever, chills, muscle aches, tiredness), depression, abdominal pain, increased liver enzymes, and blood cell count decreases. Let your doctor know immediately if you have any of these symptoms or feel sad, tired, hot or cold, experience hives, rashes, bruising, yellowing of the skin, or a change in body weight (gain or loss).*

*Compared with Avonex, side effects were generally similar despite the higher, more frequent dosing of Rebif. People taking Avonex had more flu-like symptoms than those taking Rebif. People taking Rebif had a greater number of injection-site reactions, elevated liver enzymes, and decreased white blood cell counts. Avonex® is a registered trademark of Biogen Idec.*

*This information is not intended to replace discussions with your health care provider. For additional information about Rebif, please consult the [Medication Guide](#) or [Rebif Prescribing Information](#) available at [www.rebif.com](http://www.rebif.com) and talk to your doctor. You can also call 1-877-44-REBIF (1-877-447-3243) toll free. Rebif is available by prescription only in 22 mcg and 44 mcg prefilled syringes and a titration pack.*