

Health Bulletin

Why MS Patients Should Know Their NAb Status

(NAPSA)—If you have multiple sclerosis (MS)—a chronic, progressive illness affecting the nerves in the brain, spinal cord and central nervous system—you're not alone. MS affects more than 400,000 people in the United States, 2.5 million worldwide and two to three times as many women as men.

The story of Sue Kelly, who was diagnosed with MS when she was almost 40 years old, may inspire others.

Now 48, Sue has relapsing-remitting MS and her initial symptoms included double vision. Following her diagnosis, she began taking an interferon beta (IFN- β) medication. "I considered myself informed about MS. Then my physician told me that some patients taking IFN- β medication develop a form of antibody [proteins of the immune system that develop in response to foreign substances] to the medication."

These are called neutralizing antibodies, or NAb, when they interfere with—or neutralize—the activity of the IFN- β .

Vision Problems

After Sue continued to experience vision problems, including seeing halos, poor night vision and trouble seeing color, her physician became concerned that her vision issues might be related to the development of NAb. He encouraged her to take a NAb test.

Despite her occupation as a nurse and knowledge about MS, Sue didn't realize that there might be a relationship between her NAb status and her treatment's effectiveness.

Her doctor explained that NAb develop in 24 to 45 percent of all MS patients treated with



If you have multiple sclerosis, talk with your doctor about NAb.

IFN- β medications, and that in individuals who maintain a high NAb level over time, the clinical efficacy of the medication seems to be reduced, as evidenced by changes in magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) activity, relapse rates and disease progression.

Double Vision Went Away

Sue was fortunate that her doctor insisted that she be tested, as NAb tests currently aren't part of standard MS clinical practice for IFN- β patients. After reviewing her lab results and physical exam, her neurologist recommended that she switch medications. Over the next six months, Sue's double vision gradually went away.

"I feel relieved that I checked my NAb status, and that I am doing everything I can to manage my MS and protect my health," said Sue.

For more information on NAb, visit <http://main.nationalmssociety.org>.

To learn about new research regarding NAb, visit www.clinicaltrials.gov.