



(W13) A BEST PRACTICE APPROACH FOR AN IMMUNOTHERAPY PATIENT SUPPORT PROGRAM

There are many complexities in providing a support program for patients starting intramuscular (IM) interferon beta-1a (Avonex). Of the disease modifying therapies (DMTs) available, Avonex is sometimes perceived to be difficult to self-administer. As nurses, we asked ourselves what we could do to provide a learning environment conducive to promoting:

- self-management of treatment with Avonex
- understanding of the disease process
- patient adherence
- quality of life

It is recognized that nurses involved in the delivery of Avonex may be competent experts within the nursing discipline, however not all work within MS healthcare teams, and they may be geographically isolated. With this in mind, a Best Practice document was developed, to create a uniform approach for all nurses supporting and educating multiple sclerosis (MS) patients prescribed Avonex.

As nurses involved in an Australia-wide support program for Avonex patients, we recognized a need to develop a framework for best practice. An extensive literature search identified an abundant amount of information on all DMTs and on best practice for MS care, however, we were unable to locate any information specific to best practice and immunotherapy.

Best practice encourages excellence, resulting in consistent standards of practice and quality support for patients. The Best Practice framework identifies two components:

- 1) Dimensions of immunotherapy: clinical practice
- 2) Dimensions of professional practice

Section one is comprised of: knowledge of the MS disease process and interventions; advocacy; assessment of the patient/treatment readiness; effective patient training and education; documentation; and multidisciplinary collaboration and communication. Section two is comprised of: ethics; professional development; and professional accountability.

Our document is written from an Australian perspective, and is anticipated that it will represent a consistent point of reference, and be utilised world-wide as a basis for developing evaluation tools, quality assurance, orientation procedures and performance appraisal.

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