

# Characterization of changes in multiple sclerosis patient care in Germany during the COVID-19 pandemic

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## BACKGROUND

- The lockdown ordered by the German state in spring 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic led to partly massive restrictions in public and private life. The restrictions and measures that were implemented led to various challenges such as providing patient care.
- There are great uncertainties among patients and physicians regarding the impact of their disease, especially the impact of immunomodulatory/-suppressive MS therapies on the risk for COVID-19 infection and complications.
- The recommendations of different MS societies varied in their extent of whether to postpone scheduled applications or to change the current therapy.

## OBJECTIVE

- To evaluate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on MS patient care and treatment decision in Germany.

## METHODS

- An online survey was developed to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the daily routine of neurologists and its consequences on MS therapy.
- Data from approx. 100 neurologists is expected to be collected at selected clinics and office based practices in Germany during July 2020-April 2021.

## RESULTS

- As of February, 2021 68 surveys (14 as part from online survey PERITIA and 54 as part from online survey TROPOS) were received from the inquired sites and included in the analysis.
- The majority of neurologists report reorganization of local premises and processes, such as establishing multiple waiting rooms.
- Around 70% of the neurologists state that patients were insecure about their MS treatment and needed increasingly medical advice regarding their MS disease and the consequences of immunomodulatory therapy (Figure 1).
- Physicians report changes in MS treatment during the pandemic including an increase in telemedical control visits and postponed infusion visits (Figure 2).
- Patients rescheduled or canceled monitoring visits (Figure 1 & Figure 2).
- Physicians state concerns about the use of immuno-modulating MS treatments other than Interferon  $\beta$  and glatiramer acetate during pandemic (Figure 3).
- 81% of the neurologists see an advantage towards treatments that are home administered (Figure 4).

Figure 1. Behavioral changes of patients due to pandemic

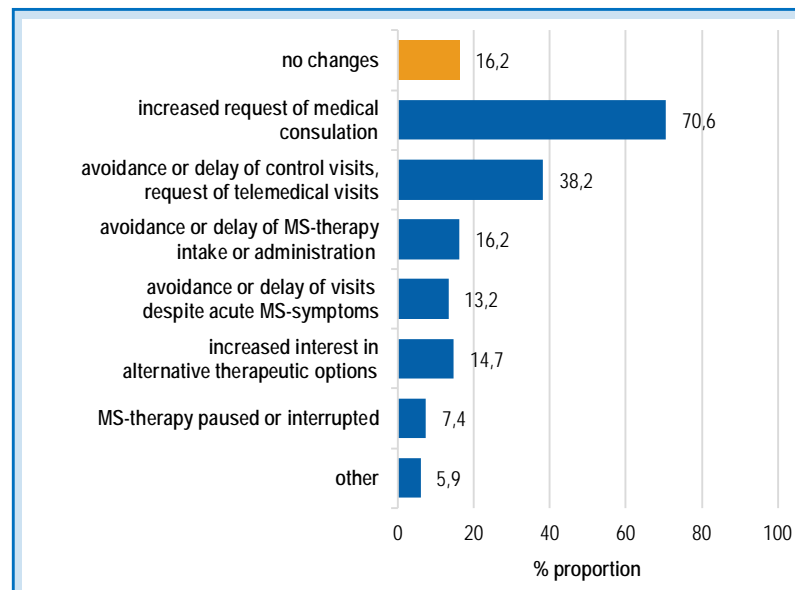


Figure 2. Changes in MS treatment due to pandemic

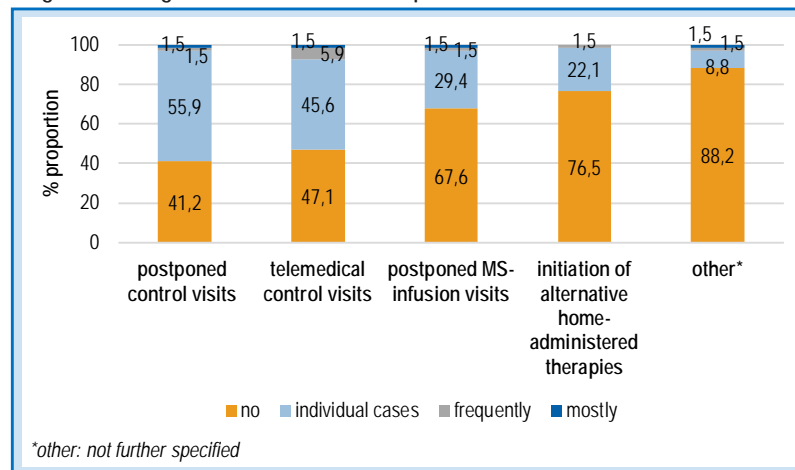


Figure 3. Physicians' concerns about use of immuno-modulating treatments during the pandemic

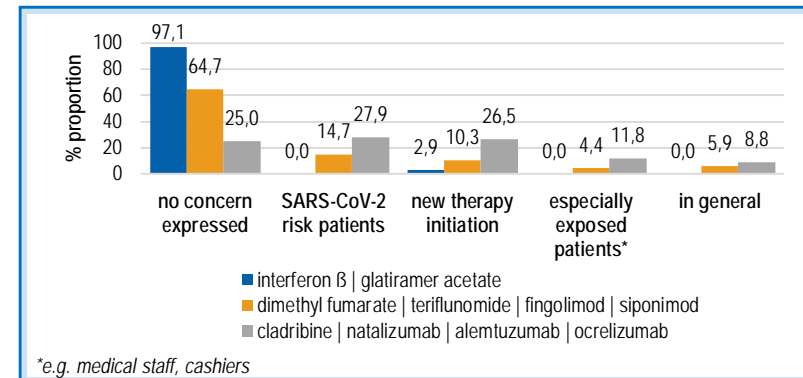
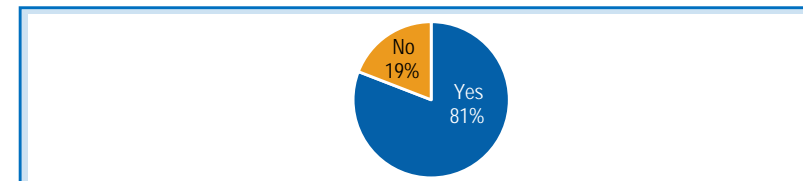


Figure 4. Benefit of home-administered injections over infused MS therapies



## CONCLUSION

- The COVID-19 pandemic is causing great uncertainty for MS patients and treating doctors and is presenting a new challenge for the care of MS patients.
- Reported postponed and cancelled visits may have an impact on disease control and add on the risk of non-compliance and hence treatment success. Thus, patient education is extremely relevant to avoid risk behavior or uncertainty. MS societies have continuously updated recommendation during the course of this survey highlighting the great demand on medical education.
- Based on current data, MS patients have no increased risk for Covid-19 infection, unless they possess certain risk factors. No clear safety concerns for any DMT during Covid-19 infections has been reported.

## DISCLOSURE

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