

Progressive MS trials in the international spotlight

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The American Academy of Neurology is currently meeting in Boston. Scientific meetings like this are vital for the dissemination of information. They give scientists and clinicians an opportunity to discuss findings and discuss changes in treatment regimens based on the latest scientific evidence.

Therefore it is encouraging to see progressive MS being discussed. Progressive MS is responsible for the majority of impact of MS both on the individual and on society. Research has produced a number of treatments for relapsing forms of MS, however there has been a

shortage of treatments produced for progressive forms. As such progressive MS remains one of the key priorities for MS Research Australia.

“It is absolutely critical that we work together as a global MS research community to find viable treatment options for people with both primary and secondary progressive MS; that have been lacking for so long” said Dr Matthew Miles, Chief Executive Officer of MS Research Australia.

At the American Academy of Neurology meeting, there have been multiple presentations describing new treatments for progressive MS. These include research supported by MS Research Australia, into adoptive immunotherapy, a new therapy that involves taking our patients’ immune cells retargeting them to attack the Epstein Barr Virus and then reinfusing them back into the patient. We have previously reported about it [here](#).

Other presentations including studies into using Siponimod for the treatment of secondary progressive MS. Siponimod is an oral medication that belongs to the same class of drugs as fingolimod (Gilenya) and targets molecules found on the surface of cells known as the sphingosine-1-phosphate (S1P) receptor. This receptor is found on a variety of cells including some types of cells found in the central nervous system. This may contribute to the ongoing damage to myelin and nerves that occurs in secondary progressive MS. This oral medication is able to enter the brain, potentially targeting these cells directly.

The phase III clinical trial results for Siponimod on secondary progressive MS were released last year. The results compared Siponimod against a placebo. It involved 1651 patients and is the largest study conducted in SPMS to date. Participants were monitored using the expanded disability status scale (EDSS), a scale that measures an individual’s disability. The studies main goal was to find whether there was a delay in progression of disabilities as measured by EDSS and confirmed over at least 3 months. Other outcomes included changes in the timed 25-foot walk test and MRI measures. More details can be found [here](#).