

## Title: Unmet needs and treatment of relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis in Saudi Arabia: focus on the role of ofatumumab

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Treatment-pattern data suggest that some patients with multiple sclerosis (MS) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) may not be receiving optimal treatment. A virtual meeting of ten expert Saudi neurologists, held on October 23, 2020, discussed unmet needs in relapsing–remitting MS (RRMS), and the role of ofatumumab as a suitable treatment in the KSA. Multiple unmet needs were identified: poor quality of life, with high rates of depression and anxiety; a negative impact of MS on work ability; treatment choices that may compromise efficacy for safety or vice versa; inconvenient or complex dosage regimens; and limited access to patient education and support. Early use of highly effective disease-modifying treatments (DMTs) results in better patient outcomes than starting with less effective treatments and downstream escalation, but this strategy may be underutilized in the KSA. B cells are important in MS pathogenesis, and treatments targeting these may improve clinical outcomes. Ofatumumab differs from other B cell–depleting therapies, being a fully human monoclonal antibody that binds to CD20 at a completely separate site from the epitope bound by ocrelizumab, and being administered by subcutaneous injection. When compared with teriflunomide in two randomized, phase 3 clinical trials in patients with RRMS, ofatumumab was associated with significant reductions in annualized relapse rates, rates of confirmed disability worsening, and active lesions on magnetic resonance imaging. The incidence of adverse events, including serious infections, was similar with the two treatments. Ofatumumab is a valuable first- or second-line treatment option for RRMS in the KSA, particularly for patients who would benefit from highly effective DMTs early in the disease course, and for those who prefer the convenience of self-injection. Future research will clarify the position of ofatumumab in RRMS treatment, and comparative cost data may support the broad inclusion of ofatumumab in formularies across the KSA.

### Biography

Hazem Wahba is the neuroscience therapy area medical head, leading the medical team in the development of the scientific part and the implementation of scientific activities in the respective therapeutic area. He initiated innovative RWE, projects and partnerships with the healthcare system to position Novartis as the preferred scientific partner. He has more than 11 years of experience in diverse roles across different multinational pharmaceutical companies. He is the champion in Real-World Evidence for Saudi to support the other franchises Launch Powerhouse to build RWE plans for their key launches. Hazem holds a bachelor's degree in Pharmaceutical Science from Suez Canal University, Egypt, 2010 and a PharmD Degree from Suez Canal University, Egypt, 2021.