

## FDA approves Ocrelizumab for relapsing-remitting and primary progressive MS

4<sup>th</sup> April, 2017



The American Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved OCREVUS™ (ocrelizumab) for the treatment of both relapsing and primary progressive forms of multiple sclerosis. This makes ocrelizumab the first ever FDA approved medication for primary progressive MS.

Ocrelizumab is a type of medication known as a monoclonal antibody. It targets a specific type of immune cell, called B cells, and it lowers the number of B cells circulating around the body.

These cells normally help the body fight off foreign invaders protecting against infections and producing antibodies, but in MS they are believed to be misguided and contribute to the immune-mediated attack on the central nervous system.

Ocrelizumab is administered as an intravenous infusion every six months. The first dose is given as two infusions, two weeks apart. Subsequently doses are given as a single infusion.

It is important to note ocrelizumab may not benefit all people with primary progressive MS and is unlikely to completely halt progression. However, clinical trials in 732 people with primary progressive MS, comparing ocrelizumab to a placebo (dummy) infusion, showed that ocrelizumab significantly reduced the risk of disability progression by 24% compared to the placebo. It also decreased the volume of brain lesions.

In trials of 1656 people with relapsing-remitting MS, ocrelizumab significantly reduced the relapse rate by up to 47% and significantly delayed disability progression by 40% compared to interferon beta-1a (Rebif) as well as reducing the inflammation as seen on MRIs. For more detail on the trial results see our earlier article [here](#)

Like any medication, there are potential side effects including, infusion-related reactions, increased risk of infection, and the clinical trials indicate a slight increase in the risk of developing cancers.

MS is a very varied disease, and not all medications will work for all people. However, the addition of another weapon in the arsenal is very promising and the fact this is the first medication for primary progressive MS is exciting.