

# MS Education Event- December 2020

## Question & Answer Session Follow-up

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**Question: If I get the vaccine (I don't have MS), will I still be able to pass the virus on to others (my loved one with MS)?**

*Answer: If you have a good response to the vaccine, it is likely you will be protected from COVID-19 infection and, therefore, less likely to pass the virus to others provided response during event.*

**Question: You didn't say much about Tecfidera and the vaccine. Is that because there is no data?**

*Answer: There are no data regarding the effect of Tecfidera on the effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine. However, some small studies have measured MS patients' responses to other vaccines during treatment with Tecfidera. Those studies showed adequate responses.*

**Question: I'm post-round one of Lemtrada (I was infused in September of this year). Any idea or studies on COVID-19 and patients on this med?**

*Answer: There are no studies that have looked at COVID-19 in patients who have received alemtuzumab (Lemtrada). There are a few case reports that revealed that a small number of MS patients treated with Lemtrada who contracted COVID-19 infection had a good outcome. However, this has not been studied in a larger scale. At this point, there's no evidence that patients treated with Lemtrada have a poor outcome or more severe COVID-19 disease.*

**Question: I'm currently on Ocrevus and supposed to get my 2nd full infusion on 12/18/2020. Am I OK to go ahead with it and continue with social distancing as I have been or should I wait until the pandemic dies down to resume therapy?**

*Answer: In general, we continue treatment with ocrelizumab (Ocrevus) except in specific case-by-case situations where it's necessary to take a break. We recommend you discuss this with your neurologist. We also recommend continuing with social distancing and all other CDC recommendations.*

**Question: If a patient on Ocrevus takes a break from the Ocrevus infusions and instead receives a COVID-19 vaccine, will that patient be protected better against COVID-19? How risky is it to have that gap between infusions? And how long of a gap would be needed to gain the B-cell count back enough to actually work? Thanks!**

*The timing of vaccination while taking ocrelizumab (Ocrevus) or similar medication is important. We usually wait at least 4 – 6 weeks after the flu vaccination before the following infusion; however, we do not know how this will apply to the COVID-19 vaccination. If a gap is taken during Ocrevus treatment to get the COVID-19 vaccine, blood tests should be done periodically to monitor the level of B lymphocytes. These cells are usually suppressed for up to or greater than six months during treatment with Ocrevus.*



**Question: Since Gilenya can cause abnormal liver test results, why are these patients still tested? Also, when do you worry that the results could be real?**

*Answer: Fingolimod (Gilenya) can cause abnormal liver test in a small number of patients. It's necessary to monitor liver function tests in all patients taking this drug in order to identify patients who develop this side effect. Depending on the level of abnormality, Gilenya may need to be discontinued to avoid liver damage.*

**Question: With extra-low B cell count, should you take COVID-19 vaccine on the chance it might help?**

*Answer: The timing of vaccinations while on Ocrevus is important—in some cases it may be beneficial to wait until toward the end of the dosing cycle or to monitor the B cells periodically to assess when they are coming up before giving the vaccination. In general, there should be a 4- to 6-week period between vaccination and the next Ocrevus infusion.*

**Question: Who is the best candidate for clinical trials? What factors are important?**

*Answer: Every clinical trial has specific criteria for the appropriate candidate. If you're interested in clinical trial participation, you need to be seen in our clinic and we will determine if you meet the criteria for the ongoing clinical trials at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center.*

**Question: Where can one apply to participate in a clinical study?**

*Answer: In order to be evaluated for participation in clinical trials, you will need to be seen in clinic and we will determine if you are a good candidate for the clinical trials at the Ohio State Wexner Medical Center.*

**Question: Is there a brief way to explain the differences between how different MS drugs work in the body? For instance, monoclonal antibody infusions as opposed to injectable interferons or fumarate capsules?**

*Answer: Please visit the National Multiple Sclerosis Society (NMSS) website, which has information on all MS drugs. <https://www.nationalmssociety.org/Treating-MS/Medications>.*

*Please note: Our MS physicians and clinical team have provided responses to these listed questions that were posed at a live webinar event. The answers noted above are not replacement for treatment. For questions and additional information, please discuss with your MS Provider or Neurologist.*

*Visit [wexnermedical.osu.edu/MSCommunity](http://wexnermedical.osu.edu/MSCommunity) for resources and to learn more about The Ohio State University Medical Center's MS Clinic and Care Team.*