**Yemeni Association for MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS Patients wins INTERNATIONAL AWARD**

The Yemeni Association for MS patients has won the category of Patient Organization at the second *MS Brain Health Awards.*

This major accolade was announced on 25 May 2023 by the Oxford Health Policy Forum in Oxford, England.

The awards recognize those who are working in line with the policy recommendations from the report, ‘MS Brain Health Time Matters’ to create a better future for people with multiple sclerosis (MS) and their families.

Five award categories showcase excellence in championing the importance of brain health and timely intervention in managing MS: Patient Organization, Patient Advocate, Team, Individual and Innovation.

* The **Patient Organization Award** goes to the **Yemeni Association for MS patients** for their success in overcoming extremely difficult circumstances and obstacles to establish an organization of volunteers from MS patients, their families and friends, to highlight the suffering and loss of people living with MS and to lobby for their rights and access to adequate resources.
* **Multiple Sclerosis New Zealand (MSNZ*)*** is given the **Team Award** for their work to establish evidence-based treatment criteria, using MS Brain Health standards demonstrating that NZ was not meeting international recommendations for optimal brain health. As a result of their efforts, New Zealanders can now be initiated with disease-modifying therapies (DMTs) on diagnosis instead of having to wait for a relapse, thus minimizing the risk of irreversible damage, and can also remain on treatment up to an Expanded Disability Status Scale (EDSS) of 6.5\*.
* The **AIMS charity** receives the **Innovation Award** for their work to raise awareness and provide information about how multiple sclerosis (MS) patients in the UK can access Haematopoietic Stem Cell Transplantation (HSCT) as a treatment option; they are now providing bespoke assistance to at least 5 people per week as well as hosting monthly StarMS\*\* roundtable meetings.
* **Amanda (Mindy) Watts** is awarded the **Patient Advocate Award** for her work as lead administrator of the UK HSCT Facebook group for MS and Autoimmune Disease. She has shown her dedication to fostering a supportive community for MS patients and promoting awareness about HSCT as a treatment option for autoimmune diseases.
* **Dr Ruth Dobson** wins the **Individual (HCP) Award** for applying the MS Brain Health recommendations in her clinical practice and research activities to improve patient outcomes. She has provided exceptional leadership of the UK MS Pregnancy Register, ensuring that pregnant women with MS receive optimal care during and after childbirth.

“Implementation of the MS Brain Health policy recommendations for better MS care are benefitting MS patients around the world thanks to these amazing individuals and organizations. It’s an honour to be able to highlight and thank them for the amazing work they do through this award,” said Professor Gavin Giovannoni of Blizard Institute, Queen Mary University of London and Oxford Health Policy Forum.

“It is wonderful to see how these award winners have applied the MS Brain Health recommendations to practical use with an unwavering commitment to improving the lives of those with MS,” said Kajsa Wilhelmsson, Oxford Health Policy Forum’s acting Director.

The awards were established in 2022 by the Oxford Health Policy Forum as part of its MS Brain Health initiative. *The report Brain health: time matters in multiple sclerosis* is an evidence-based consensus document describing a strategy to maximize lifelong ‘brain health’ in people with multiple sclerosis (MS) under three overarching themes:

1. Minimize delays in diagnosis of MS and in the time to treatment initiation.
2. Set goals for treatment and ongoing management that will optimize outcomes for every person with MS.
3. Consult the most robust evidence base possible when making treatment and management decisions.

The Oxford Health Policy Forum’s mission is to help achieve the best possible outcomes for people living with and affected by life-changing conditions by bringing together a wide range of stakeholders in fora to define what policy changes are needed to achieve the best possible outcomes. It then ensures uptake of its recommendations through dissemination, in co-operation with participants of our fora and wider groups of followers. To find out more about the work of Oxford Health Policy Forum, visit <https://www.oxfordhealthpolicyforum.org>

\* EDSS of 6.5 means the patient can walk 20 metres with the two aids (crutches or sticks) without stopping for rests

\*\* StarMS Trial: Autologous Stem Cell Transplantation versus Alemtuzumab, Ocrelizumab, Ofatumumab or Cladribine in Relapsing-Remitting Multiple Sclerosis (MS).

**ENDS**

**EDITOR’S NOTES:**

**If you want to find out more about the work of some of our award winners, you might find these links useful:**

[**https://www.aimscharity.org/**](https://www.aimscharity.org/)

[**https://yamspc.org/index.php?lang=en**](https://yamspc.org/index.php?lang=en)

[**https://www.msnz.org.nz/**](https://www.msnz.org.nz/)

[**https://www.facebook.com/groups/ukhsct/**](https://www.facebook.com/groups/ukhsct/)

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