

## **COMPARISON OF INTERFERON BETA PRODUCTS AND AZATHIOPRINE IN TREATMENT OF RELAPSING-REMITTING MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS**

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Objectives: To compare the relative efficacy of interferon beta (IFN $\beta$ ) products and azathioprine (AZA) in the treatment of relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis (RRMS). Methods: Ninety-four previously untreated patients of short duration with RRMS were randomly allocated to the two treatment groups. The first group received IFN $\beta$  products (Betaferon, Avonex or Rebif), the second group received AZA for 12 months. Response to treatment was assessed at 3, 6, and 12 months after start of therapy. Results: The mean number of relapse during one year of the study was lower in AZA group than in the IFN $\beta$  products group (0.28 vs. 0.64,  $P<0.05$ ). After 12 months, 27.7% of patients receiving IFN $\beta$  products remained relapse free compared with 76.6% of those given AZA. Expanded Disability Status Scale (EDSS) decreased by 0.30 units in IFN $\beta$ -treated patients ( $P<0.05$ ) and 0.46 in AZA-treated patients ( $P<0.001$ ). Conclusion: Treatment with IFN $\beta$  products, and AZA significantly reduce relapse rate and EDSS score in patients with RRMS with AZA shows more effective than any IFN $\beta$  formulations.