**Supplementary Table 1:** Group comparisons of symptoms, types care, and sociodemographics (number of cases, percentages, and mean ± SD are reported, t-test /Fisher’s exact test)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ‘active’  SPMS n=467 | ‘inactive’ SPMS n=1046 | p-value (active vs. inactive) | ‘unclassifiable’  n=2750 |
| **Symptoms at onset** |  | | | |
| Visual disturbances, blurred vision | 47% | 40% | 0.025 | 44% |
| Brain stem functions (double vision, facial sensation, facial paralysis, hearing loss, speech disorder, dysphagia) | 26% | 21% | 0.13 | 25% |
| Motor disorders (weakness, paralysis) | 55% | 56% | 0.65 | 56% |
| Cerebellar disorder (coordination, fine motor disturbance, tremor, ataxia) | 32% | 28% | 0.19 | 31% |
| Sensory disturbances (misperceptions, emotional disorders of different qualities) | 50% | 49% | 0.70 | 53% |
| Bladder dysfunction | 19% | 13% | 0.016 | 14% |
| Bowel dysfunction | 8% | 3% | 0.001 | 4%\* |
| Sexual disorders | 7% | 5% | 0.32 | 4% |
| Depression, euphoria, concentration and memory disorders | 15% | 14% | 0.90 | 16% |
| Other onset symptoms | 4% | 5% | 0.17 | 5% |
| Polysymptomatic onset | 47% | 45% | 0.46 | 41% |
| **Current Symptoms** |  | | | |
| Spasticity | 74% | 74% | 0.83 | 73% |
| Ataxia | 51% | 49% | 0.33 | 47% |
| Fatigue | 60% | 66% | 0.019 | 60% |
| Pain | 46% | 40% | 0.032 | 41% |
| Micturition disturbed | 64% | 66% | 0.51 | 66% |
| Defecation disturbed | 21% | 21% | 0.99 | 21% |
| Sexual disorders | 17% | 18% | 0.80 | 15% |
| Cognitive disorders | 45% | 36% | 0.002 | 37%\* |
| Depression | 33% | 28% | 0.050 | 29% |
| Oculomotor disturbances | 22% | 18% | 0.072 | 16%\* |
| Dysarthria / Dysphonia | 15% | 13% | 0.20 | 14% |
| Dysphagia | 8% | 6% | 0.13 | 8% |
| Epileptic seizures | 4% | 2% | 0.16 | 3% |
| Other paroxysms | 7% | 6% | 0.61 | 5% |
| Walking problems | 94% | 95% | 0.52 | 94% |
| **EDSS** (latest)M | 5.80 (±1.5) | 5.65 (±1.5) | 0.10 | 5.97 (±1.7)\* |
| MSSS (global)M | 6.39 (±2.1) | 6.19 (±2.1) | 0.13 | 6.43 (±2.2) |
| **Care & Aids** |  | | | |
| Domiciliary care | 58% | 54% | 0.13 | 59% |
| Ambulatory care | 18% | 14% | 0.057 | 19%\* |
| Day care | 1% | 1% | 0.93 | 2% |
| Inpatient care | 4% | 1% | 0.008 | 6%\* |
| Walker | 54% | 52% | 0.54 | 49% |
| Bath lift | 17% | 16% | 0.59 | 18% |
| Wheelchair | 46% | 46% | 0.76 | 53%\* |
| Rollator | 57% | 52% | 0.045 | 51% |
| **Non-medicinal symptomatic treatment** |  | | | |
| Physiotherapy (total) | 56% | 58% | 0.46 | 55% |
| Physio. for walking problems | 70% | 74% | 0.13 | 70% |
| **Job** |  | | | |
| Job: Age Retirement / Pension | 14% | 12% | 0.42 | 17% |
| Job: Unemployed | 3% | 2% | 3% |
| Job: Vocational or school education / training / retraining | 1% | 0% | 0% |
| Job: Employed (full-time) | 1 % | 12% | 11% |
| Job: Housewife / houseman | 5% | 5% | 5% |
| Job: not specified | 9% | 9% | 13% |
| Job: Part-time employed | 10% | 11% | 9% |
| Job: Early retirement  (occupational disability) | 47% | 49% | 43% |
| Age at retirementM | 43.1 (±9.5) | 44.1 (±9.5) | 0.21 | 44.5 (±9.7) |

EDSS, expanded disability status scale; n, number of patients; MSSS, multiple sclerosis severity score; SPMS, secondary progressive multiple sclerosis.  
M mean (± standard deviation); \* indicates that the not classifiable group statistically significantly differs from the classifiable groups at a type-I-error level of 1%.