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DISSERTATION

Epigallocatechin-Gallat bei verschiedenen Verlaufsformen der
Multiplen Sklerose

Epigallocatechin gallate in different disease courses of multiple
sclerosis

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Abkürzungsverzeichnis

9-HPT	Steckbretttest 9-Loch (<i>9-hole peg test</i>)
AAR	jährliche Hirnatrophierate (<i>annualized atrophy rate</i>)
AE	unerwünschtes Ereignis (<i>adverse event</i>)
ARR	jährliche Schubrate (<i>annualized relapse rate</i>)
ART	automatische Mittelwertbildung in Echtzeit (<i>automatic real time function for image averaging</i>)
BDI	Beck-Depressions-Inventar
BPF	Hirnparenchymfraktion (<i>brain parenchymal fraction</i>)
CDP	bestätigte Behinderungsprogression (<i>confirmed disease progression</i>)
CEL	kontrastmittelanreichernde T1- Läsionen (<i>contrast enhancing lesions</i>)
CNS/ZNS	Zentralnervensystem (<i>central nervous system</i>)
DMT	verlaufsmodifizierende Therapie (<i>disease modifying therapy</i>)
EAE	experimentelle autoimmune Enzephalomyelitis
EDSS	<i>Expanded Disability Status Scale</i>
EGCG	Epigallocatechin-Gallat
EudraCT	European Union Drug Regulating Authorities Clinical Trials Database
FSS	<i>Fatigue Severity Scale</i>
GA	Glatirameracetat
GCIP	Ganglienzellschicht zusammen mit der inneren plexiformen Schicht (<i>combined ganglion cell and inner plexiform layer</i>)
GMV	Volumen graue Substanz (<i>grey matter volume</i>)
GTE	Grüntee-Extrakt
HPLC	Hochleistungsflüssigkeitschromatographie
INL	innere Körnerzellschicht (<i>macular inner nuclear layer</i>)
ITT	<i>Intention to treat</i>
LMM	lineare gemischte Modelle (<i>linear mixed models</i>)
MFIS	<i>Modified Fatigue Impact Scale</i>

MRI	<i>magnetic resonance imaging</i>
MRT	Magnetresonanztomographie
MS	Multiple Sklerose
MSFC	<i>Multiple Sclerosis Functional Composite</i>
NF-κB	nukleärer Faktor κB
OCT	optische Kohärenztomographie (<i>optical coherence tomography</i>)
OE	optionale offene Verlängerungsphase (<i>optional open label extension</i>)
PAS	primäres Analyseset
PASAT	<i>paced auditory serial addition test</i>
PBVC	<i>percentage brain volume change</i>
PMS	progrediente Multiple Sklerose
PP	per Protokoll
PPMS	primär chronisch-progrediente Multiple Sklerose
pRNFL	peripapilläre retinale Nervenfaserschicht (<i>retinal nerve fiber layer</i>)
RNS	reaktive Stickstoffspezies (<i>reactive nitrogen species</i>)
ROS	reaktive Sauerstoffspezies (<i>reactive oxygen species</i>)
RRMS	schubförmige Multiple Sklerose (<i>relapsing remitting multiple sclerosis</i>)
SAE	schwerwiegendes unerwünschtes Ereignis (<i>serious adverse event</i>)
SD	Standardabweichung
SD-OCT	<i>Spectral-Domain-OCT</i>
SPMS	sekundär chronisch-progrediente Multiple Sklerose
T1w	T1-gewichtet
T2w	T2-gewichtet
TIV	intrakranielles Volumen (<i>total intracranial volume</i>)
TNF	Tumornekrosefaktor
TWT	25-Fuß-Gehtest (<i>timed 25-foot walk test</i>)
WMV	Volumen weiße Substanz (<i>white matter volume</i>)
ZNS/CNS	Zentralnervensystem (<i>central nervous system</i>)

Abstract

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is the most prevalent, chronic-inflammatory, autoimmune disease of the central nervous system (CNS). It is still incurable and the most common cause of non-traumatic disability in early adulthood. In addition to the inflammatory component that drives demyelination, neurodegeneration with loss of axons and neurons that occurs from the onset of the disease plays an enormous role in disease progression.

Evidence suggests that epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG) has anti-inflammatory, antioxidative and neuroprotective properties *in vitro* and *in vivo*. However, the proof of impact on clinical, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and optical coherence tomography (OCT) disease parameters in MS of humans is still lacking. The objective of this work was to assess safety and efficacy of EGCG in patients with progressive MS (PMS) without disease-modifying treatment (DMT) and in patients with relapsing-remitting MS (RRMS) add-on to glatiramer acetate (GA).

Therefore, we performed two prospective, double-blind, phase II, randomized controlled trials:

(1) The monocentric SUPREMES trial for patients with PMS and (2) the multicentric SUNIMS trial for patients with RRMS on GA.

In SUPREMES we enrolled 61 patients (23 primary progressive MS (PPMS), 38 secondary progressive MS (SPMS)) randomly assigned to receive up to 1,200 mg EGCG (n=30) or placebo (n=31) daily for 36 months with an optional open-label EGCG treatment extension (OE) of 12-month duration. The primary end point was the rate of brain atrophy, quantified as brain parenchymal fraction (BPF). Secondary end points included additional MRI and clinical parameters and OCT parameters as an exploratory outcome.

In SUNIMS we enrolled 122 patients with RRMS receiving stable GA treatment, which were randomly assigned to up to 800 mg EGCG (n=62) or placebo (n=60) for 18 months. The primary outcome was the proportion of patients without new T2 weighted (T2w) lesions on brain MRI within 18 months. Secondary end points included additional MRI and clinical parameters. Immunologic effects of EGCG were investigated in exploratory experiments.

In both trials the primary endpoint was not met and none of the secondary MRI, OCT and clinical end points revealed group differences. Pharmacologic analysis in the SUNIMS trial revealed wide ranging EGCG plasma levels. Adverse events of EGCG in both trials were mostly mild and occurred with a similar incidence in the placebo group. One patient in each trial in the EGCG group had to stop treatment due to elevated aminotransferases (>3.5 times above upper normal limit).

Conclusion: In RRMS patients on GA and PMS patients without DMT, we could not demonstrate a treatment effect of oral EGCG on MRI, clinical and OCT disease activity parameters. The treatment was safe at a daily dosage up to 1200 mg EGCG in PMS and up to 800 mg in RRMS patients. Further investigations with higher bioavailability of EGCG are necessary.

Zusammenfassung

Multiple Sklerose (MS) ist die häufigste chronisch-entzündliche Autoimmunerkrankung des zentralen Nervensystems (ZNS). Sie ist nicht heilbar und die häufigste Ursache für nichttraumatische Behinderung im jungen Erwachsenenalter. Neben der entzündlichen Komponente, die zu Demyelinisierung von Axonen führt, trägt die Neurodegeneration mit dem Verlust von Axonen und Neuronen bereits von Beginn an zur Behinderungsprogression bei.

Epigallocatechin-Gallat (EGCG) werden *in vitro* und *in vivo* entzündungshemmende, antioxidative und neuroprotektive Eigenschaften zugeschrieben. Der Nachweis eines Therapieeffektes von EGCG auf MRT- und klinische Verlaufparameter sowie in der Optischen Kohärenztomographie (OCT) bei der MS steht noch aus.

Ziel dieser Arbeit war es, die Sicherheit und Wirksamkeit von EGCG bei Personen mit progredienter MS (PMS) ohne krankheitsmodifizierende Behandlung (*disease modifying therapy*, DMT) und bei Personen mit schubförmig remittierender MS (RRMS) unter stabiler Therapie mit Glatirameracetat (GA) zu untersuchen.

Es wurden zwei prospektive, doppelt verblindete, randomisierte, Placebo-kontrollierte Studien der Phase II durchgeführt: (1) Die monozentrische SUPREMES-Studie für Personen mit PMS und (2) die multizentrische SUNIMS-Studie für Personen mit RRMS unter GA.

Für (1) schlossen wir 61 Personen (23 primäre PMS (PPMS), 38 sekundäre PMS (SPMS)) ein, die randomisiert bis zu 1.200 mg EGCG (n=30) oder Placebo (n=31) täglich für 36 Monate erhielten, mit einer optionalen offenen Verlängerungsphase (OE) von 12 Monaten. Der primäre Endpunkt war die Rate der Hirnatrophie im Vergleich zur Baseline, quantifiziert als *Brain Parenchymal Fraction*.

In (2) untersuchten wir 122 Personen mit RRMS unter stabiler Behandlung mit GA und die randomisiert für 18 Monate täglich bis zu 800 mg EGCG (n=62) oder Placebo (n=60) erhielten. Der primäre Endpunkt war der Anteil der Personen ohne neue T2-gewichtete (T2w) Läsionen im zerebralen MRT.

Zu den sekundären Endpunkten in beiden Studien gehörten weitere MRT- und klinische Verlaufparameter sowie explorativ immunologische Effekte von EGCG bei SUNIMS und OCT-Parameter bei SUPREMES.

In beiden Studien wurde der primäre Endpunkt nicht erreicht, und bei den sekundären MRT-, OCT- und klinischen Endpunkten keine Gruppenunterschiede festgestellt. Die pharmakologische Analyse in der SUNIMS-Studie ergab sehr unterschiedliche EGCG-Plasmaspiegel. Unerwünschte Wirkungen von EGCG waren meist leicht und ähnlich häufig wie unter Placebo. Je eine Person aus der EGCG-Gruppe in beiden Studien musste die Behandlung aufgrund erhöhter Aminotransferasen abbrechen.

Schlussfolgerung: Bei RRMS-Personen mit GA und PMS-Personen ohne DMT konnten wir keinen Behandlungseffekt von EGCG auf MRT-, OCT- und klinische Verlaufparameter nachweisen. Die Behandlung war bei bis zu 1200 mg EGCG täglich bei PMS- und bis zu 800 mg bei RRMS-Personen sicher. Weitere Untersuchungen mit verbesserter Bioverfügbarkeit und anderem Wirkprofil sind notwendig.

1 Einleitung

1.1. Die Multiple Sklerose

Multiple Sklerose (MS) ist die häufigste chronisch-entzündliche Autoimmunerkrankung des zentralen Nervensystems (ZNS) [1], von der weltweit mehr als 2,5 Millionen Menschen betroffen sind [2]. Die genaue Ätiologie der MS ist unbekannt, aber ein zentrales Element ist eine Dysregulation des Immunsystems mit einer Infiltration autoreaktiver Lymphozyten in das ZNS, die eine Entzündung in verschiedenen Regionen des Gehirns und des Rückenmarks hervorruft und in der Folge zu Demyelinisierung, axonaler und teilweise neuronaler Schädigung führt [2]. Bei der demyelinisierenden Komponente werden die Neuronen schützenden Myelinscheiden durch Entzündungsprozesse geschädigt [3]. Pathogenetisch spielen eine teils hiervon unabhängige axonale Schädigung und neurodegenerative Prozesse bereits in den frühesten Krankheitsstadien eine entscheidende Rolle, die maßgeblich für die Progression der Erkrankung sind und damit zu möglicher irreversibler Behinderung führen [4–6].

Die häufigste Verlaufsform der MS ist die schubförmig-remittierende (*relapsing remitting MS*, RRMS), bei der sog. Krankheitsschübe mit neurologischer Symptomatik wie z.B. Sensibilitätsstörungen, Sehstörungen, Lähmungserscheinungen, Gleichgewichts- und Koordinationsstörungen über wenige Tage bis zu mehreren Wochen auftreten mit teilweiser oder vollständiger Remission. Aus der schubförmigen entwickelt sich zu 80% nach 10-20 Jahren eine sekundär-chronisch progrediente Verlaufsform (SPMS) mit oder ohne Schubaktivität [7–9]. In ca. 10-15 % tritt die primär-chronisch progrediente Form (PPMS) bereits von Beginn an auf, die durch schleichende Behinderungsprogression mutmaßlich verursacht von Neurodegeneration und fortschreitenden Krankheitsprozess meist ohne Schubaktivität gekennzeichnet ist [10,11].

1.2. Wichtige klinische und apparative Verlaufparameter der Multiplen Sklerose

Eines der Hauptziele bei der Behandlung der progredienten MS (PMS) ist daher die Verlangsamung bzw. das Aufhalten der Krankheitsprogression als Folge von der axonalen und neuronalen Degeneration [12]. Hirnatrophie ist bereits in frühen Stadien der MS präsent [13]. Da die Hirnatrophie bei der MS mit kognitivem Abbau und Behinderungsprogression [14–16] assoziiert ist, stellt sie neben den klinischen Parametern (*Expanded Disability Status Scale* (EDSS)-Score und *Multiple Sclerosis Functional Composite* (MSFC)-Score)) einen etablierten Outcome-Parameter bei der MS [17] dar. Es hat sich gezeigt, dass die mittlere jährliche Rate der Hirnatrophie bei MS-Personen (0,5-1,35 % pro Jahr) höher ist als bei vergleichbaren gesunden Personen im gleichen Lebensalter (0,1-0,3 %) [13].

Als Messinstrumente für die Hirnatrophie im Verlauf sind in der zerebralen Magnetresonanztomographie (MRT) die prozentuale Hirnvolumenänderung (*percentage brain volume change*, PBVC) und auch die Differenzen der Hirnparenchymvolumen (*brain parenchymal fraction*, BPF) etabliert [18,19].

Die optische Kohärenztomographie (OCT) ermöglicht zudem die Quantifizierung der Schädigung der vorderen Sehbahn bei MS-Personen [20]. Die Abnahme der peripapillären retinalen Nervenfaserschicht (pRNFL), die nicht-myelinisierte Axone enthält, und der Ganglienzellschicht (zusammen mit der inneren plexiformen Schicht, GCIP), die deren Zellkörper enthält, spiegelt den neuroaxonalen Schaden [21] als Folge der retrograden Neurodegeneration [21] bei MS wieder. In verschiedenen OCT-Studien war eine Verdünnung dieser beiden Schichten ein Surrogatmarker für radiologische und klinische Krankheitsaktivität [22–24]. Mittels OCT lassen sich Behandlungseffekte verschiedener MS-Therapien nachweisen [25] und es wird zunehmend als Outcome-Parameter in interventionellen Studien eingesetzt [26]. Bei PMS kommt es zu einer schnelleren chronischen Abnahme von pRNFL und GCIP als in RRMS [27].

1.3. Bisherige medikamentöse Therapien der Multiplen Sklerose

In den letzten Jahren wurden über ein Dutzend verlaufsmodifizierender Medikamente (*disease modifying therapies*, DMT) zur Behandlung der RRMS zugelassen, die hauptsächlich auf die Entzündungsprozesse der Krankheit abzielen [28–31] und die jährliche Schubrate (*annualized relapse rate*, ARR) verringern. Radiologische inflammatorische Krankheitsaktivität ist in der zerebralen MRT u.a. messbar in der Reduktion neuer oder vergrößerter T2-gewichteter (T2w) Läsionen sowie kontrastmittelanreichernder T1-gewichteter (T1w) Läsionen (*contrast enhancing lesions*, CEL). Im Gegensatz zu den zahlreichen DMT zur Behandlung der RRMS gibt es für die Behandlung der PPMS nur den monoklonalen Antikörper Ocrelizumab [19]. Zur Therapie der SPMS stehen das Chemotherapeutikum Mitoxantron mit hohem Nebenwirkungsprofil sowie neuerdings der Sphingosin-1-Phosphat-Rezeptor-Modulator Siponimod, der jedoch nur bei vorhandenen Schüben oder neuen T2w-Läsionen im Vorjahr zugelassen ist [32], zur Verfügung. Die Mehrheit der zugelassenen DMT haben ein beträchtliches Nebenwirkungsprofil und sind mit hohen Kosten verbunden.

Sichere und wirksame Behandlungsoptionen mit neuroprotektiven Eigenschaften, die in der Lage sind die neurodegenerativen Aspekte, die bereits in den frühesten Krankheitsstadien in jeder Verlaufsform auftreten, aufzuhalten oder zu verlangsamen, bleiben ein unbefriedigtes klinisches Bedürfnis [12], insbesondere bei der PMS.

1.4. Epigallocatechin-Gallat als potentieller therapeutischer Ansatz

Dem Konsum von grünem Tee wird eine präventive Wirkung auf verschiedene entzündliche und neurodegenerative sowie auch andere Krankheiten zugeschrieben [33,34]. Die wichtigste und potenteste Verbindung in diesem Zusammenhang ist das Polyphenol Epigallocatechin-Gallat (EGCG), das 50-80 % der gesamten Katechine in grünem Tee ausmacht [35].

EGCG wirkt ex-vivo antioxidativ als starker wasserstoffspendender Radikalfänger von reaktiven Sauerstoff- und Stickstoffspezies (*reactive oxygen species*, ROS, und *reactive nitrogen species*, RNS), durch Hydroxyl- und Trihydroxyl(Gallat)-Gruppen [36], und Chelatbildner mit zweiwertigen Übergangsmetall-Ionen (insbesondere Kupfer, Zink und Eisen) [37], wodurch die Eisen-induzierte Bildung freier Radikale in vitro verhindert wird. Auch wenn ROS und RNS sowohl als schädlich als auch als nützlich bekannt sind, führt eine Überproduktion von ROS zu oxidativem Stress, der Membranlipide, Proteine und DNA der Zellen schädigt. [38]

Zudem unterdrückt EGCG das Wachstum verschiedener Zelltypen, so hemmen physiologische Mengen von EGCG die Vermehrung primärer T-Zellen bei Mäusen durch Hemmung des Zellzyklus und der Zellteilung. [39]

Bei der experimentellen autoimmunen Enzephalomyelitis (EAE), die als Tiermodell der MS eingesetzt wird, wirkt EGCG entzündungshemmend, indem es die Aktivierung des nukleären Faktor κB (NF- κB) in T-Zellen herunterreguliert und somit die Tumornekrosefaktor (TNF) α -Produktion und T-Zell-Proliferation verringert [40]. Es hat hier zudem neuroprotektive Eigenschaften, indem es die Bildung neurotoxischer ROS und RNS in Neuronen blockiert und so den neuronalen Zelltod hemmt [40]. In diesem Tiermodell verringerte oral verabreichtes EGCG den klinischen Schweregrad der Erkrankung sowie die ZNS-Entzündung und die neuroaxonale Schädigung signifikant, sowohl präventiv als auch therapeutisch [40–42]. Diese Ergebnisse lieferten die Grundlage für mutmaßliche antioxidative, neuroprotektive und entzündungshemmende Wirkungen von EGCG auch im menschlichen ZNS. Darüber hinaus zeigte die gleichzeitige Anwendung von EGCG und Glatirameracetat (GA) bei EAE in vitro und in vivo synergistische Wirkungen [43].

1.5. Zielstellung dieser Arbeit

Vor diesem Hintergrund untersuchten wir zum einen die Wirkung von oralem EGCG auf Personen mit PMS über 36 Monate als auch auf Personen mit RRMS unter stabiler GA-Therapie über einen Zeitraum von 18 Monaten auf radiologische und klinische Krankheitsparameter sowie Sicherheit und Verträglichkeit der Substanz.

Die Fragestellungen dieser Arbeit sind:

Lässt sich ein Therapieeffekt von EGCG auf den Krankheitsverlauf der Multiplen Sklerose nachweisen?

- a. Bei PMS ohne DMT über 36 Monate: in Bezug auf die Zunahme der Hirnatrophie (Abnahme der BPF im MRT; SUPREMES-Studie [44]) und auf weitere radiologische und klinische Verlaufsparemeter sowie auf die Abnahme der pRNFL im OCT [45]?
- b. Bei RRMS unter stabiler Therapie mit GA über 18 Monate: in Bezug auf den Anteil der Personen ohne neue T2w-Läsionen im zerebralen MRT, die Anzahl und das Volumen von neuen T2w-Läsionen und auf weitere radiologische und klinische Verlaufsparemeter (SUNIMS-Studie [46])?

2 Methodik

2.1. Studiendesign und Teilnehmer*innen

SUPREMES

In der SUPREMES-Studie (NCT00799890) [44] wurden Personen mit PPMS und SPMS im Alter zwischen 18 und 65 Jahren über einen Zeitraum von 36 Monaten und zusätzlicher optionaler Verlängerungsphase von 12 Monaten untersucht. Sie erfüllten die 2005 revidierten McDonald-Kriterien für eine PPMS oder SPMS [47] und wiesen einen EDSS-Score von drei bis acht beim Screening auf. In dieser monozentrischen, prospektiven, doppelblinden, parallelen, randomisierten, Placebo-kontrollierten, zweiarmigen Phase-II-Studie wurde die Wirkung von Sunphenon EGCG auf klinische und radiologische Therapieverlaufparameter sowie Parameter in der OCT [45] evaluiert. Ausgeschlossen für die OCT-Bildgebung wurden Teilnehmer*innen mit starker Myopie (< -5 dpt) oder anderen ophthalmologischen Vorerkrankungen wie Glaukom oder rezidivierender Iritis.

SUNIMS

In der SUNIMS-Studie (NCT00525668) [46] wurde die Wirkung von EGCG auf Personen mit RRMS im Alter von 18 bis 60 Jahren, einem EDSS Score von 0 bis 6,5 über einen Zeitraum von 18 Monaten untersucht, die die McDonald-Kriterien 2005 [47] für eine RRMS erfüllten. In dieser multizentrischen, prospektiven, doppelblinden, randomisierten, Placebo-kontrollierten Phase-II-Studie waren die Personen unter stabiler Behandlung mit GA von 20 mg täglich subkutan über einen Zeitraum von mindestens sechs Monaten.

In beiden Studien war ein schubfreier Zeitraum von mindestens 30 Tagen vor der Randomisierung obligatorisch. Die wichtigsten Ausschlusskriterien waren schwere systemische Erkrankungen, Infektionen des ZNS, maligne Erkrankungen, Verdacht auf degenerative ZNS-Erkrankungen wie Morbus Parkinson, Chorea Huntington, Alzheimer-Krankheit sowie vaskuläre ZNS-Erkrankungen. Klinisch relevante vordefinierte Laboranomalien und die Einnahme von potenziell hepatotoxischen Medikamenten sowie von Cytochrom P450 3A4 hemmenden oder induzierenden Arzneimitteln schlossen genau wie Kontraindikationen für die MRT-Bildgebung ebenfalls die Teilnahme an der Studie aus. Da die Wirkung von EGCG [48,49], dem wichtigsten und potentesten Katechin des grünen Tees, untersucht wurde, war der zusätzliche Konsum von grünem Tee oder Grünteeextrakt verboten.

Ein weiteres Ausschlusskriterium war die Anwendung von Mitoxantron, Cyclophosphamid, Cyclosporin, monoklonalen Antikörpern oder anderen immunmodulatorischen (außer bei der

SUNIMS-Studie die Therapie mit GA) oder immunsuppressiven Medikamenten, mit Ausnahme von Methylprednisolon, bis 3 Monate vor Studienbeginn.

2.2. Ethik

Die Studien wurden von den lokalen Ethikkommissionen (SUPREMES: LaGeSo ZS EK 10 407/08, neu: 08/0407-EK 15; SUNIMS: 07/0255-EK 13) und vom Bundesinstitut für Arzneimittel und Medizinprodukte (BfArM) genehmigt. Die SUPREMES-Studie ist bei „European Union Drug Regulating Authorities Clinical Trials Database“ (EudraCT, 2008-005213-22) und clinicaltrials.gov (NCT00799890) registriert, die SUNIMS-Studie bei EudraCT (2006-006323-39) und clinicaltrials.gov (NCT00525668). Sie wurden gemäß der Deklaration von Helsinki in der jeweils gültigen Fassung durchgeführt, unter strikter Einhaltung des Studienprotokolls, der geltenden deutschen Gesetze (Arzneimittelgesetz, 14. Novelle 2005) und der harmonisierten dreiteiligen Leitlinie für die gute klinische Praxis (ICH-GCP). Jede*r Teilnehmer*in hat vor der Aufnahme in die Studie eine schriftliche Einverständniserklärung abgegeben.

2.3. Randomisierung und Verblindung

Die Personen, die die Einschlusskriterien erfüllten, wurden zur Vermeidung von Inhomogenitäten in den zu untersuchenden Gruppen randomisiert. Bei SUPREMES wurde bei der Randomisierung nach Geschlecht (weiblich, männlich) und Diagnose (PPMS, SPMS) stratifiziert. Bei SUNIMS wurde nach Geschlecht und nach Anzahl der T2w-Läsionen beim Screening (≤ 15 oder >15 T2w-Läsionen) stratifiziert. Es erfolgte in beiden Studien die Randomisierung nach dem Zufallsprinzip (1:1) zu den zwei Studienarmen EGCG oder Placebo.

Bei SUNIMS erhielten die Teilnehmer*innen nach einer Aufdosierungsphase von 4 Monaten 800 mg EGCG oder Placebo als Add-on zu GA. Bei SUPREMES erhielten sie nach 6 Monaten 600 mg, nach 18 Monaten 800 mg und nach 30 Monaten 1200 mg, inkl. der optionalen 12-monatigen offenen Verlängerungsphase (*optional open-label extension, OE*), bei der alle Personen EGCG erhielten.

2.4. Sunphenon/EGCG-Kapseln

Die Teilnehmer*innen erhielten entweder Sunphenon /EGCG-Kapseln (Grüntee-Extrakt (GTE) mit > 90 % EGCG, Produkt von Taiyo International, www.taiyointernational.com) oder Placebo-

Kapseln mit identischem Aussehen. Taiyo lieferte das Sunphenon-Pulver, die Apotheke der Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin verkapselte den Wirkstoff. Die EGCG-Konzentration (Mindestanforderung > 90%) in jeder Sunphenon-Charge wurde über den gesamten Studienzeitraum vom Hersteller überprüft und zertifiziert. Die Konzentration wurde in regelmäßigen Abständen von der Apotheke vor Ort mittels Hochleistungsflüssigkeitschromatographie (HPLC) bestätigt. Die HPLC-Analysen bestätigten auch nach 6-monatiger Lagerung von Pulver und Kapseln eine EGCG-Konzentration von mindestens 90%.

Die unabhängige Apotheke, die die gescreenten Studienteilnehmer*innen auf die Behandlungsgruppen verteilte, erstellte eine separate Block-Randomisierungsliste, um die Personen entweder Sunphenon EGCG oder Placebo (mit identischem Aussehen) für 36 Monate bei SUPREMES und für 18 Monate bei SUNIMS zuzuweisen.

Nur der Apotheker hatte während der gesamten Studie Kenntnis von der Behandlungszuordnung; alle Mitarbeiter und Personen blieben hinsichtlich der Behandlungszuordnung verblindet. Eine Entblindung für den Notfall oder im Falle eines schwerwiegenden unerwünschten Ereignisses wurde sichergestellt.

Die Personen erhielten Behälter mit EGCG-Kapseln oder Placebo in ausreichender Menge für das 3-monatige Intervall bis zum nächsten Studienbesuch. Bei jedem dieser Besuche wurde eine Medikamentenbilanzierung durchgeführt, um die Einnahme der Studienmedikation zu kontrollieren.

2.5. Klinische und laborchemische Untersuchungen

Standardisierte neurologische Beurteilungen zur klinischen Verlaufsbeurteilung einschließlich des EDSS-Score und des MSFC [50,51] wurden von einem/r speziell geschulten Untersucher*in beim ersten Screening (das maximal eine Woche vor der Randomisierung stattfand), dann alle sechs Monate (bei SUPREMES) bzw. alle drei Monate (bei SUNIMS) und bei jeder außerplanmäßigen Visite im Falle eines Schubes, durchgeführt. Ein Schub war definiert als jedes neue oder wieder auftretende neurologische Symptom in Abwesenheit von Fieber oder einer Infektion, das mindestens 24 Stunden andauerte und mit einem Abstand von mindestens 30 Tage seit dem letzten Schub. Neurologische Symptome mussten in einer neurologischen Untersuchung durch einen unabhängigen und geschulten EDSS-Rater (untersuchender Arzt*in) bestätigt werden [52]. Der MSFC ist ein zusammengesetztes Maß, bestehend aus dem Steckbretttest (*9-hole peg test*, 9-HPT), dem Gehtest (*timed 25-foot walk test*, TWT) und dem Konzentrations- und Aufmerksamkeitstest (*paced auditory serial addition test*, PASAT). Um dem Übungseffekt des PASAT entgegen-

genzuwirken, der spezifische kognitive Funktionen wie Rechenfähigkeit, auditive Informationsverarbeitungsgeschwindigkeit und Flexibilität misst, führten alle Teilnehmer*innen vor Studieneinschluss den Test mindestens dreimal durch [53].

Die Therapiesicherheit wurde überwacht mit Meldungen von unerwünschten Ereignissen, klinischen Untersuchungen und Laboruntersuchungen (Blutbild, Leberenzyme, Elektrolyte, Kreatinin, C-reaktives Protein, Blutzucker, Gerinnung). Diese Untersuchungen wurden alle 2-3 Monate und bei pathologischen Befunden kurzfristig durchgeführt.

Bei SUPREMES wurde zusätzlich zu Studienbeginn und nach Monat 36 eine Fatigue-Symptomatik mit Hilfe der Fatigue Severity Scale (FSS) [54] und der Modified Fatigue Impact Scale (MFIS) [55] sowie eine depressive Symptomatik mithilfe des Beck-Depressions-Inventars I (BDI) [56] erfasst.

2.6. Outcome-Parameter

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Der primäre Endpunkt war die Zunahme der Hirnatrophie, gemessen als Differenz der BPF [57] zum Monat 36 im Vergleich zur BPF zu Beginn der Studie. Zusätzlich wurde die PBVC [58] als zusätzliches Maß für die Hirnatrophie bestimmt.

Sekundäre Auswerteparameter in der MRT-Bildgebung waren die Anzahl und das Volumen hyperintenser Läsionen in T2-Wichtung sowie die Anzahl und das Volumen von CEL zum Monat 36.

Sekundäre klinische Ergebnisparameter waren die Progression der Behinderung, gemessen anhand des EDSS, und die bestätigte Progression der Behinderung (*confirmed disease progression*, CDP), definiert als ein Anstieg des EDSS um 1 Punkt, wenn der Ausgangswert zwischen 3,0 und 5,5 betrug, oder ein Anstieg um 0,5 Punkte, wenn der Ausgangswert 6,0 oder höher war, jeweils bestätigt bei einer geplanten Visite 6 Monate danach. Weitere sekundäre klinische Ergebnisparameter waren der MSFC und seine drei Komponenten, BDI [56], FSS und MFIS einschließlich der Subscores (körperlich, psychosozial, kognitiv) und der Prozentsatz der schubfreien und progressionsfreien Personen sowie die ARR.

Weitere sekundäre Endpunkte waren die Bewertung der Sicherheit und Verträglichkeit von EGCG.

Am Ende der OE in Monat 48 wurden alle Outcome-Parameter erneut gemessen.

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Der primäre Endpunkt war der Anteil der Personen ohne neuer hyperintenser T2w-MRT-Läsionen innerhalb von 18 Monaten. Sekundäre MRT-Endpunkte waren die Anzahl und das Volumen der

hyperintensiven T2w-Läsionen, die Anzahl und das Volumen der hypointensen T1w-Läsionen, die Anzahl der CEL und die Hirnatrophie, quantifiziert durch die PBVC. Zu den sekundären klinischen Endpunkten zählten das Fortschreiten der Behinderung, gemessen anhand des EDSS und des MSFC, sowie die ARR. Die immunologischen Auswirkungen von EGCG wurden in explorativen Analysen untersucht.

2.7. MRT Daten und Analyse

Für beide Studien wurden die MRT-Messungen an einem Standort durchgeführt, sodass identische und konstante Aufnahmebedingungen für die wiederholten Messungen im 1,5 Tesla-Scanner (Sonata Siemens, Siemens Medical Systems, Erlangen, Deutschland) sichergestellt wurden. Das MRT-Protokoll beinhaltete bei beiden Studien eine T2w *fluid attenuated inversion recovery* (FLAIR) Sequenz (TR/TE 10000 ms/108 ms, Schichtdicke 3 mm) und eine hochauflösende 3D T1w *magnetization prepared rapid acquisition gradient echo* (MPRAGE) Sequenz (TR/TE 2110 ms/4.38 ms, Schichtdicke 1 mm), vor und nach intravenöser Gadolinium-Gabe (Gd-DTPA, Magnevist, Bayer-Schering, Berlin, Deutschland).

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MRT-Messungen von BPF, PBVC und T2w-hyperintensiven Läsionen wurden beim Screening und zu den Monaten 12, 24 und 36 durchgeführt, die CEL-Messungen wurden beim Screening und zum Monat 36 gemessen.

Die T2w- und CEL (Läsionsanzahl und Läsionsvolumen) wurden bei der SUPREMES-Studie manuell mit ITK-SNAP segmentiert [59].

Das Ausmaß der Hirnatrophie wurde mit Hilfe von zwei Ansätzen ausgewertet. Im ersten Ansatz wurde die BPF für jeden Zeitpunkt mit dem Softwarepaket CAT12 (Version 12.5, <http://www.neuro.uni-jena.de/cat/>) berechnet. Hierbei wurde das Volumen der grauen Substanz (*grey matter volume*, GMV) und der weißen Substanz (*white matter volume*, WMV) sowie das gesamte intrakranielle Volumen (*total intracranial volume*, TIV) segmentiert und auf Segmentierungsfehler kontrolliert. Die BPF wurde dann wie folgt berechnet: $BPF = (GMV + WMV) / TIV$. Die Atrophie wurde dann als Differenz zwischen dem Ausgangswert und den nachfolgenden Zeitpunkten berechnet. In einem zusätzlichen Ansatz wurde die PBVC longitudinal mit der SIENA-Pipeline aus dem FMRIB-Softwarepaket (FSL Version 5.0.9) ausgewertet [58].

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Für die SUNIMS-Studie wurde zudem eine Triple-Echo-Spin-Echo-Sequenz (TR 5780 ms, TE1 13 ms, TE2 81 ms, TE3 121 ms, Schichtdicke 3 mm, 44 zusammenhängende axiale Schichten ohne Abstand) verwendet, um Protonendichte- und T2w-Bilder zu erhalten.

MRT-Messungen wurden auf eine Linux-Workstation übertragen und nach einem zuvor beschriebenen halbautomatischen Verfahren verarbeitet [60]. Dazu gehörte eine Bildkoregistrierung (FMRIB's Linear Image Registration Tool, FMRIB Analysis Group, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK) und eine Inhomogenitätskorrektur, die in das Softwarepaket MedX v.3.4.3 (Sensor Systems Inc., Sterling, VA, USA) eingebettet war. Die Läsionslast der weißen Substanz und die Anzahl der Läsionen in T2w-Scans sowie die Anzahl der CEL wurden routinemäßig mit dem Softwarepaket MedX v.3.4.3 gemessen. Das Volumen des Hirngewebes, normalisiert auf die Kopfgröße des Probanden, wurde mit SIENAx, einem Bestandteil von FSL [58,61], geschätzt.

Die prozentuale Veränderung des Hirnvolumens (PBVC) im Verlauf wurde durch Ko-Registrierung von MRT-Aufnahmen zu zwei Zeitpunkten ermittelt. Oberflächenveränderungen wurden mit SIENA bestimmt, um den Hirnvolumenverlust zu schätzen (quantifiziert durch jährliche PBVC) [58]. In allen Phasen wurde eine strenge Qualitätskontrolle der SIENA-Analyse durchgeführt. MRT-Scans wurden ausgeschlossen, wenn eine Atrophieberechnung nicht möglich war, die Qualität der MRT-Sequenz(en) für die Auswertung unzureichend war oder ein für die Auswertung erforderlicher Referenzscan nicht verfügbar war.

2.8. Optische Kohärenztomographie

OCT ist ein nichtinvasives bildgebendes Verfahren zur Darstellung der Netzhaut und beruht auf dem Prinzip der Weißlichtinterferometrie [62]. Licht aus dem Nahinfrarotbereich wird von den verschiedenen Schichten der Netzhaut zurückgestreut und interferiert mit einem Referenzstrahl, um die Tiefe und relative Intensität zu messen und so 2D-Querschnitts- oder 3D-Volumenbilder zu erzeugen [63].

Volumetrische OCT-Bilder bestehen aus parallelen Querschnittsbildern, den so genannten B-Bildern. Jeder B-Scan setzt sich aus mehreren axialen Scans oder A-Scans zusammen. Erst die Einführung und Anpassung des *Spectral-Domain-OCT* (SD-OCT), bei dem ein fester Referenzspiegel und ein Spektrometer zur Messung des Reflexionsvermögens verwendet werden, förderte seine Verwendung in der medizinischen Bildgebung. SD-OCT bietet eine hohe axiale Auflösung (3-5 μm), ein hohes Signal-Rausch-Verhältnis aufgrund der Bildmittelung, eine bessere Reproduzierbarkeit und eine schnelle Bildaufnahme (typische A-Scan-Rate von 40 kHz) [64,65].

Die OCT-Untersuchungen standen nicht ab dem Beginn der SUPREMES-Studie zur Verfügung. Die Teilnehmer*innen hatten ihre erste OCT-Untersuchung im Median 1,05 Jahre (Interquartilsbereich 0,00-1,52 Jahre) nach der Randomisierung [45].

Alle OCT-Untersuchungen wurden mit dem Spectralis-OCT (Heidelberg Spectralis SD-OCT, Heidelberg Engineering, Deutschland) mit automatischer Mittelwertbildung in Echtzeit (*automatic real time function for image averaging*, ART) und aktiver Augenverfolgung an nicht dilatierten Augen durchgeführt. Es wurde ein auf die Papille zentrierter Standard-Ringscan für die Messung der pRNFL-Dicke verwendet (12° , 1536 A-Scans, $16 \leq \text{ART} \leq 100$). Die pRNFL wurde dann unter Verwendung der Segmentierung durch die Gerätesoftware (Viewing Module, Version 6.0.14.0) berechnet. Das Makulavolumen für die intraretinale Segmentierung von GCIP und der inneren Körnerzellschicht (*macular inner nuclear layer*, INL) wurde mit einem Scanfeld mit einer Größe von $25^\circ \times 30^\circ$ zentriert auf die Fovea centralis aufgenommen (61 vertikale B-Scans, 768 A-Scans pro B-Scan, $12 \leq \text{ART} \leq 15$). Die Segmentierung der Makula-Scans wurde mit SAMIRIX, einem hauseigenen, automatisierten Programm [66] durchgeführt, welches nur geringfügige Nachkorrektur erfordert. Alle OCT-Scans wurden auf nicht-MS-pathologische Netzhautveränderungen, auf ausreichende Qualität gemäß den OSCAR-IB-Kriterien [67,68] und Segmentierungsfehler überprüft und, falls erforderlich, von erfahrenem, verblindeten Personal manuell korrigiert. Die OCT-Methoden wurden in Übereinstimmung mit den APOSTEL-Kriterien [69] angegeben.

Folgende Schichten wurden ausgewertet: die pRNFL, die GCIP sowie die INL.

2.9. Statistische Analyse

Die Ergebnisse wurden als arithmetisches Mittel \pm Standardabweichung (SD), Median (Interquartilsbereich) oder Häufigkeit (%) angegeben. Ein p-Wert $< 0,05$ wurde als statistisch signifikant angesehen. Sekundäre Endpunkte wurden mit dem nicht-parametrischen (exakten) Mann-Whitney-Test für unabhängige Gruppen auf Unterschiede zwischen den Gruppen geprüft. Unterschiede bei kategorialen Variablen wurden mit dem Exact-Fisher-Test berechnet.

Unterschiede zwischen der Verum- und der Placebogruppe in Bezug auf den gesamten Zeitverlauf wurden mittels nichtparametrischer Analyse von Längsschnittdaten in einem zweifaktoriellen Design [70] bewertet (1. Faktor: Behandlungsgruppen, 2. Faktor: Zeit; Dies kumuliert in drei Tests: Unterschiede in den Gruppen, signifikante Veränderungen im Zeitverlauf und Interaktionen zwischen Gruppen und Zeit).

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Die Studie war zunächst als interne, doppelblinde Pilotstudie mit Einschluss von zunächst insgesamt 60 Personen mit anschließender Rekalkulation der Fallzahl [71] geplant. Diese wurde jedoch aufgrund von Rekrutierungsschwierigkeiten nicht durchgeführt, sondern die Studie wurde am Ende der verblindeten Phase (nach 36 Monaten) beendet und entblindet. Aufgrund der großen Anzahl von Studienabbrecher*innen in beiden Gruppen (11 von 30 in der EGCG- und 12 von 31 in der Placebo-Gruppe) verwendeten wir einen modifizierten *Intention to treat* (ITT)-Ansatz, bei dem wir Personen in die Auswertung einschlossen, bei denen die Daten des primären Endpunkts verfügbar waren (primäres Analyseset (PAS), 38 Personen). Zusätzlich wurde eine Per-Protocol-Analyse (PP, 37 Personen) durchgeführt, bei der Personen ausgeschlossen wurden, die das Studienprotokoll schwerwiegend verletzt haben [44] (siehe CONSORT-Diagramm, Abbildung 1 [44]).

Der primäre Endpunkt BPF wurde mit dem exakten Mann-Whitney-Test berechnet.

Die Auswertung wurde um eine multivariate, nichtparametrische Kovarianzanalyse (MANCOVA) [72] unter Verwendung von Baseline-Werten als Kovariaten ergänzt.

Numerische Berechnungen wurden mit SAS (Version 9.4 [TS1M3], SAS Institute Inc., Cary, NC, USA), SPSS (Version 25, SPSS Inc., an IBM Company, Chicago, IL, USA) und R (Version 3.0.2, The R Project for Statistical Computing) durchgeführt.

OCT der SUPREMES-Kohorte

Numerische OCT-Variablen der SUPREMES-Kohorte [45] wurden mit dem Wilcoxon-Rangsummentest analysiert, für kategorische Variablen wurde der Chi-Quadrat-Test angewendet. Aufgrund des insgesamt geringen Stichprobenumfangs und der hohen Anzahl fehlender Daten testeten wir die OCT-Erstuntersuchung und die longitudinale Haupthypothese mit der "nichtparametrischen Analyse von Längsschnittdaten in faktoriellen Experimenten" in R (Version 3.6.2) [73]. Dabei wurden jeweils die OCT-Daten für einen Zeitraum von 2 Jahren ausgewertet, da nach 3 Jahren Beobachtungsdauer (Dauer der SUPREMES-Studie) nicht genügend OCT-Daten vorhanden waren. Die Ergebnisse konnten zusätzlich mit linearen gemischten Modellen (*linear mixed models*, LMM) verifiziert werden. Für diese explorative Ergebnisanalyse wurden keine Korrekturen für Mehrfachvergleiche durchgeführt. Statistische Analysen wurden mit R (Version 3.6.2) [74] mit den Paketen nparLD [73], lme4, lmerTest, tidyverse, tableone, ggplot2, beeswarm, ggplot, RMisc durchgeführt.

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Die primäre Analyse wurde mit der ITT-Population durchgeführt, zusätzlich wurde PP-Analyse durchgeführt, bei der Personen mit schwerwiegenden Verstößen gegen das Protokoll ausgeschlossen wurden (z.B. weniger als 90 % der Studienmedikation eingenommen hatten).

Der primäre Endpunkt wurde mit dem Exact-Fisher-Test ermittelt.

Numerische Berechnungen wurden mit SPSS (Version 21, IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA), StatXact 6 (CYTEL Software Corp., Cambridge, MA, USA) und SAS (Version 9.2, SAS Institute Inc., Cary, NC, USA) durchgeführt.

3. Ergebnisse

3.1. Ergebnisse der SUPREMES-Studie

3.1.1. Personen

Einundsechzig Teilnehmer*innen wurden in die SUPREMES-Studie [44] eingeschlossen und unter vorheriger Stratifizierung nach Geschlecht und Diagnose (PPMS vs. SPMS) entweder für EGCG (n = 30) oder Placebo (n = 31, siehe Abbildung 1 der Publikation) randomisiert. Die Behandlungsgruppen zeigten bezüglich der Baseline-Variablen keinen Unterschied (siehe Tabelle e-1 im Online-Supplement der Publikation [44], links.lww.com/NXI/A420). Es wurden 23 Teilnehmer*innen mit PPMS und 38 mit SPMS eingeschlossen.

Achtunddreißig Personen (19 aus jeder Gruppe) schlossen die Studie ab und konnten für den primären Endpunkt ausgewertet werden. Dreiundzwanzig Personen (11 EGCG [36,7%] und 12 Placebo [38,7%]) schieden vorher aus der Studie aus (siehe Abbildung 1 der Publikation), hauptsächlich aus persönlichen Gründen oder Verletzung des Studienprotokolls (Änderung der Medikation oder der Primärdiagnose, Compliance-Verletzung oder berichtete Unverträglichkeit der Studienmedikation bei 2 EGCG-Personen). Ein EGCG-Patient brach die Studie wegen erhöhter Aminotransferasen (> 3,5-fach über dem Normalwert) ab, die sich nach Absetzen des Medikaments normalisierten.

Alle Teilnehmer*innen, die den primären Endpunkt erreichten, hatten eine Compliance von mindestens 80 % bei der Einnahme der Studienmedikation.

3.1.2. MRT

Die Ergebnisse für die MRT-Parameter sind in Tabelle 1 der Publikation [44] zusammengefasst. In Bezug auf den primären Endpunkt (Differenz der BPF zwischen Baseline und nach 36 Monaten) beobachteten wir keinen Unterschied zwischen den Gruppen (EGCG = 0,0092 [SD 0,0152]; Placebo = 0,0078 [SD 0,0159]; p = 0,670 [44]), entsprechend jährlichen Atrophierate (*annualized atrophy rate*, AAR) von 0,31 % für Verum und 0,26 % für die Placebogruppe (Unterschied 0,05 %) [44].

Hinsichtlich der sekundären Endpunkte unterschieden sich die EGCG-Gruppe und die Placebogruppe nach Ablauf von 36 Monaten nicht: keine Unterschiede in der PBVC (p = 0,603; AAR von 0,19% für Verum und 0,27% für Placebo (Unterschied 0,08 %), bei der Anzahl und dem Volumen der T2w-Läsionen sowie bei den CELs (siehe Tabelle 1 der Publikation [44]).

3.1.3. Klinische Ergebnisse

Bei der Auswertung der klinischen Endpunkte (siehe Tabelle 2 der Publikation [44]) fanden wir keinen Unterschied zwischen den Gruppen bei EDSS, CDP, der Differenz des EDSS zwischen Ausgangswert und Monat 36, des MSFC und dessen Unterwerte, des BDI und auf den Fatigue-Skalen. Achtzehn von 27 Personen (66,67 %) in der EGCG-Gruppe und 20 von 28 Personen (71,43 %) in der Placebogruppe waren während der Studie schubfrei. Die ARR bis Monat 36 und die CDP unterschieden sich nicht zwischen den Gruppen.

Die Ergebnisse der PP-Analysen bezüglich der primären und aller sekundären Ergebnisparameter unterschieden sich nicht von denen der PAS-Analysen (Daten nicht gezeigt).

3.1.4. Subgruppen-Analysen

In den durchgeführten Subgruppen-Analysen für Personen mit niedrigerem und höherem BPF (Median-Split) und für Personen mit und ohne CEL während der Studie ergaben sich keine signifikanten Unterschiede in den Gruppen hinsichtlich des primären Endpunkts.

Auch in Untergruppen mit klinisch geringerem Behinderungsgrad (EDSS-Score < 5) und bei Personen mit einem niedrigeren individuellen Progressionsindex (EDSS/Jahre der Symptome) konnten wir keinen Unterschied für den primären Endpunkt feststellen.

Außerdem fanden wir keine geschlechtsspezifischen Effekte in Bezug auf PBVC, BPF und EDSS.

3.1.5. Längsschnitt-Analysen

Längsschnitt-Analysen des gesamten Studienverlaufs [70] einschließlich aller Zeitpunkte (0, 12, 24 und 36 Monate) zeigten ebenfalls keine Unterschiede bei den MRT- und klinischen Parametern für die primären und sekundären Endpunkte. Diese Ergebnisse wurden durch longitudinale Kovarianzanalysen [71] bestätigt (siehe multivariate longitudinale Analyse für Hirnatrophie in Abbildung 2 und T2w-Läsionen in Abbildung 3 der Publikation [44]).

3.1.6. Sicherheits-Analysen

Von den 30 Teilnehmer*innen in der EGCG-Gruppe traten bei 29 (96,7 %) und von den 31 Teilnehmer*innen in der Placebogruppe bei 28 (90,3 %) ein oder mehr unerwünschte Ereignisse auf. Elf (36,7 %) Personen in der EGCG-Gruppe und zehn (32,3%) in der Placebogruppe hatten ein schwerwiegendes unerwünschtes Ereignis (*severe adverse event*, SAE). Keines der SAEs wurde mit dem Studienmedikament in Verbindung gebracht. Alle SAEs waren aufgrund eines Krankenhausaufenthalts der jeweiligen Studienteilnehmer*innen aus verschiedenen Gründen (siehe Tabelle e-2 im Online-Supplement der Publikation [44], links.lww.com/NXI/A420).

Die Häufigkeit von SAEs und unerwünschten Ereignissen (adverse events, AE) war in beiden Studiengruppen vergleichbar. Die häufigsten AEs (> 3 %) waren grippeähnliche Infektionen, Harnwegsinfektionen, Frakturen und Prellungen nach Stürzen sowie erhöhte Leberenzyme, ohne statistischen Unterschied zwischen den Gruppen.

3.1.7. Offene Verlängerung

Siebzehn Personen aus der EGCG-Gruppe und 15 Personen aus der ehemaligen Placebogruppe entschieden sich für die anschließende OE von weiteren 12 Monaten. Dabei zeigten sich nach Monat 48 ebenfalls keine signifikanten Unterschiede in der BPF sowie der Differenz der BPF im Vergleich zur Baseline (BPF ehemalige EGCG-Gruppe = 0,6911, BPF ehemalige Placebogruppe = 0,6879; $p = 0,860$). In den sekundären Endpunkten PBVC und klinischen Verlaufsparemtern (EDSS, MSFC und Subskalen) fanden wir keinen signifikanten Unterschied zwischen den früheren Gruppen und der randomisierten Phase der Studie (Daten der OE nicht gezeigt).

Während der OE waren die Nebenwirkungen ähnlich wie in der randomisierten Phase, insbesondere traten bis zu einer Dosierung von 1200 mg EGCG täglich keine Erhöhung der Leberenzyme oder andere hepatotoxische Nebenwirkungen auf. Allerdings berichteten zwei Personen über eine subjektive Unverträglichkeit der Studienmedikation und entschieden sich, die Behandlung abubrechen.

3.1.8. OCT

Von den 61 eingeschlossenen Personen bei SUPREMES konnten 16 aufgrund fehlender OCT-Daten nicht hierfür ausgewertet werden (siehe Konsort-Diagramm Abb. 1 der Publikation [45]). Von den 45 Personen mit OCT-Daten [45] hatten sieben Personen keine Follow-up-OCT-Daten, und weitere sieben Personen mussten aufgrund von ophthalmologischen Erkrankungen wie Glaukom, rezidivierender Iritis und einer Myopie < -5 dpt ausgeschlossen werden. Folglich wurden 31 Personen (15 EGCG, 16 Placebo) in die OCT-Analyse eingeschlossen. Von den 31 Personen hatten 19 eine SPMS und 12 eine PPMS. Darüber hinaus wurde bei zwei Personen (eine EGCG, eine Placebo) ein Auge aufgrund einer unilateralen Retinopathie von allen Analysen ausgeschlossen. Zwei pRNFL-Scans von zwei Personen (beide EGCG) und 34 Makula-Scans aus 28 Sitzungen von 20 Personen (8 EGCG, 12 Placebo) entsprachen nicht den OSCAR-IB-Qualitätskriterien und konnten nicht verwendet werden [67,68]. Weitere Details finden sich in der Publikation in der Tabelle 1 [45].

Querschnittliche OCT-Befunde

Details zur Kohorte sind in Tabelle 1 der Publikation [45] beschrieben. Die erste OCT-Untersuchung fand im Median 1,05 (Interquartilsbereich 0,00-1,52) Jahre nach der Randomisierung der Personen statt. Die OCT-Kohorte umfasste 15 Personen aus der Behandlungsgruppe und 16 Personen aus der Placebogruppe. Es gab keine signifikanten Unterschiede in Bezug auf Alter, Geschlecht, Zeitdauer seit Krankheitsbeginn, EDSS, Zeit in der Studie und Nachbeobachtungsdauer zwischen Behandlungs- und Placebogruppe. Die Personen in der mit EGCG behandelten Gruppe hatten eine dickere GCIP und INL (siehe Tabelle 2 der Publikation [45]) im Vergleich zur Placebogruppe.

Longitudinale OCT-Analysen

Abbildung 2 der Publikation [45] zeigt die zeitlichen Veränderungen in der EGCG- und der Placebogruppe für INL, GCIP und pRNFL. In beiden Behandlungsgruppen fand sich eine Abnahme der GCIP und pRNFL im zeitlichen Verlauf ohne signifikanten Unterschied zwischen den Gruppen bei ähnlich gleichbleibender INL. Auch in der „nichtparametrischen Analyse longitudinaler Daten“ [74] (siehe Tabelle 3 der Publikation [45]) sowie mithilfe der LMM-Analyse (siehe Tabelle 4 der Publikation [45]) zeigte sich kein Behandlungseffekt von EGCG.

3.2. Ergebnisse der SUNIMS-Studie

3.2.1. Kohorte

Von 158 Personen, die sich einer Screeninguntersuchung unterzogen, wurden 122 in die Studie aufgenommen (siehe Abbildung 1 der Publikation [46]). Die Teilnehmer*innen wurden entweder zu EGCG (n = 62) oder Placebo (n = 60) als Zusatz zur immunmodulatorischen Therapie mit GA randomisiert.

Die beiden Gruppen unterschieden sich nicht hinsichtlich der Baseline-Parameter (siehe Tabelle 1 der Publikation [46]).

Letztendlich schlossen 17 Personen in der EGCG-Gruppe und 12 Personen in der Placebo-Gruppe die Studie nicht ab (Abbildung 1 der Publikation [46]). Dies geschah hauptsächlich aus persönlichen Gründen (z. B. Umzug oder Schwangerschaftswunsch), einem Wechsel von GA zu einer anderen DMT oder aufgrund Nichteinhaltung der Studienregeln (z B. Versäumnis von mehr als zwei Besuchen oder Verletzung der Verblindung durch Analyse der Studienmedikation durch eine dritte Institution). Eine Person in jeder Gruppe brach die Studie aufgrund von Magen-Darm-Beschwerden ab. In der EGCG-Gruppe musste ein*e Teilnehmer*in die Studienmedikation wegen erhöhter Leberenzyme, die mehr als das Dreifache der oberen Normgrenze betrugten, absetzen; die erhöhten Werte normalisierten sich nach Beendigung der Einnahme. Von den Personen,

die die gesamten 18 Monate der Studie absolvierten, hatten 33 Personen (68,8 %) unter Placebo und 37 Personen (82,2 %) unter EGCG eine Compliance von mindestens 90 % [46] in Bezug auf die Einnahme der Studienmedikation (Anzahl der eingenommenen Kapseln, ermittelt durch die Medikamentenzählung bei den Studienbesuchen).

3.2.2. MRT-Parameter

Die Ergebnisse der ITT-Analysen für die MRT-Parameter sind in Tabelle 2 der Publikation zusammengefasst. In Bezug auf den primären Endpunkt wurde kein signifikanter Unterschied im Anteil der Personen ohne neue T2w-hyperintense Läsionen zwischen EGCG- und Placebo-behandelten Personen nach 18 Monaten festgestellt. Was die sekundären Endpunkte betrifft, so nahm die Anzahl der T2w-Läsionen sowie die Anzahl der T1w-hypointensiven Läsionen unabhängig von der jeweiligen Gruppe während des Studienzeitraums zu, ebenso wie das Volumen der T2w-hyperintensiven und T1w-hypointensiven Läsionen (Abbildung 2 und Tabelle 2 der Publikation). Keiner der beiden Parameter zeigte signifikante Unterschiede zwischen den Gruppen.

Eine longitudinale Analyse des gesamten Studienverlaufs [70] mit allen verfügbaren Zeitpunkten (0, 6, 12, 15 und 18 Monate), adjustiert für die Baseline, ergab ebenfalls keinen signifikanten Unterschied bei den MRT-Parametern zwischen der EGCG- und der Placebogruppe (Daten nicht gezeigt). Beide Gruppen entwickelten während der Studie eine ähnliche Anzahl von CELs.

Auch bei der PBVC, einem Maß für die Atrophie des gesamten Gehirns, konnten wir über die 18-monatige Studiendauer keinen Unterschied zwischen den beiden Studiengruppen feststellen.

3.2.3. Klinische Parameter

Hinsichtlich der klinischen Endpunkte (siehe Tabelle 3 der Publikation [46]) wurden keine Unterschiede im EDSS oder MSFC zwischen der EGCG- und der Placebogruppe gefunden, weder ein Unterschied von der Baseline bis zum Monat 18 noch in der EDSS-Längsschnittanalyse des gesamten Studienverlaufs (Baseline-adjustiert).

Die Ergebnisse der PP-Analysen (n = 70) bezüglich der primären sowie aller sekundären Ergebnisparameter unterschieden sich nicht wesentlich von denen der ITT-Analysen (Daten nicht gezeigt).

Kein statistisch signifikanter Unterschied im Anteil der neu entstandenen T2w-Läsionen konnte in der Untergruppe mit einem EDSS von 3 und niedriger (EGCG 13/36, Placebo 11/39, p = 0,621) und in der Untergruppe der Personen mit CELs im Verlauf der Studie (EGCG 3/19, Placebo 3/11, p = 0,641) beobachtet werden [46].

3.2.4. Immunologische Analyse

Die Analyse der Häufigkeiten der wichtigsten Immunzellpopulationen (Anzahl der zirkulierenden T-Zellen, B-Zellen, Monozyten oder NK-Zellen) in einer Untergruppe von 20 EGCG-behandelten und 15 Placebo-behandelten Personen ergab, dass die Behandlung mit EGCG den allgemeinen Immunstatus der Personen nicht veränderte (Daten nicht gezeigt). Die In-vitro-Untersuchung der T-Zell-Reaktion auf verschiedene Konzentrationen von GA unter Verwendung von PBMC von 40 EGCG- und 39 Placebo-behandelten Personen zeigte, dass die Behandlung mit EGCG die allgemeine T-Zell-Reaktion der Personen auf GA nicht beeinträchtigte [46].

3.2.5. Sicherheitsparameter und Plasmaspiegel EGCG

Von den 60 Teilnehmer*innen der Placebogruppe traten bei 58 (97 %) eine oder mehrere Nebenwirkungen auf, wobei 8 (13 %) ein schwerwiegendes unerwünschtes Ereignis (SAE) hatten. In der EGCG-Gruppe hatten 60 der 62 Teilnehmer*innen (97 %) mindestens ein AE, von denen 6 (10 %) als schwerwiegend eingestuft wurden (siehe zusätzliches Material der Publikation [46], Tabelle e-1, links.lww.com/NXI/A458). Keine der SAEs wurde mit dem Studienmedikament in Verbindung gebracht. Alle traten aufgrund eines Krankenhausaufenthalts aus verschiedenen Gründen auf. Die Häufigkeit von SAE und AE war in beiden Studiengruppen ähnlich.

Die häufigsten AEs waren Infektionen der oberen Atemwege, des Magen-Darm-Trakts und der Harnwege. Ein mit Placebo behandelter und ein mit EGCG behandelter Patient brach die Einnahme der Studienmedikation aufgrund von Magen-Darm-Beschwerden ab. Da eine Person der EGCG-Gruppe aufgrund erhöhter Leberenzyme aus der Studie genommen werden musste, haben wir einen Vergleich der Leberenzymwerte zwischen unseren Studiengruppen durchgeführt. Dabei zeigten sich keine signifikanten Unterschiede (Daten nicht gezeigt) [46].

Bei 41 Personen, die EGCG erhielten, wurden 2 Stunden nach der Einnahme eines standardisierten Frühstücks und der morgendlichen Dosis von 200 mg Sunphenon ein EGCG-Plasmaspiegel zwischen 20,21 und 331,66 ng/ml gemessen. Wenn der Datensatz in 2 Gruppen unterteilt wird in eine mit höherem und geringerem EGCG-Spiegel ist die Zahl der neuen T2w-Läsionen in der Gruppe mit höheren EGCG-Spiegeln geringer [46]. Die Zahlen sind jedoch zu gering, um belastbare Aussagen zur statistischen Signifikanz treffen zu können.

4. Diskussion

4.1 Kurze Zusammenfassung der Ergebnisse

In beiden randomisierten, Placebo-kontrollierten Studien konnte kein Therapieeffekt von oralem EGCG auf radiologische (Hirnatrophie, T2w-Läsionen, CEL) und klinische (EDSS, Schubrate und MSFC) Parameter für Krankheitsaktivität bei Personen mit SPMS oder PPMS ohne DMT (SUPREMES-Studie) bzw. RRMS (SUNIMS-Studie) unter stabiler immunmodulatorischer Behandlung mit GA nachgewiesen werden. Zudem konnten in der explorativen Analyse der OCT-Parameter in SUPREMES keine Therapieeffekte von EGCG gefunden werden. Diese Ergebnisse stehen in Kontrast zu präklinischen Daten, die auf eine neuroprotektive und entzündungshemmende Wirkung von EGCG in einer Tierstudie mit EAE [40], auch in Kombination mit GA [43], hindeuten und die die Grundlage für mutmaßliche antioxidative und antiinflammatorische Wirkungen von EGCG auch im menschlichen ZNS lieferten.

Die vermutete Wirkungsweise von EGCG verbunden mit der Tatsache, dass die für westliche Länder typische konventionelle Form der MS in asiatischen Ländern mit hohem Grünteeconsum, wie z. B. Japan [75] viel seltener vorkommt, ermutigten uns, diese Studien durchzuführen.

Vor der Planung unserer Studien waren nur wenige klinische Studien mit Krebspatient*innen bekannt, die hochdosiertes EGCG oder GTE erhielten [76,77]. Für die Auswahl der maximalen Tagesdosis von EGCG mussten wir uns auf Studien an gesunden Probanden stützen, die nur kurzzeitig EGCG/GTE von 800 bis 1.000 mg pro Tag zu sich nahmen [46,78]. Wir schlossen für die SUNIMS-Studie aus einer Studie mit gesunden Probanden, bei denen die Plasmaeliminationshalbwertszeit von EGCG nach wiederholter Verabreichung von 800 mg EGCG täglich über 10 Tage bei etwa 5 Stunden lag [79], dass 400 mg EGCG zweimal täglich ausreichen würde, um selbst nach nächtlichem Fasten messbare Plasmaspiegel zu erzielen. Da erste Ergebnisse hierbei eine gute Verträglichkeit und ein gutes Sicherheitsprofil bei 800 mg täglich zeigten, wählten wir für die später gestartete SUPREMES-Studie zunächst eine Tageshöchstdosis von 800 mg EGCG bis Monat 30, später eine höhere Tageshöchstdosis von 1.200 mg bis Monat 36 und für die optionale OE bis Monat 48.

4.2 Interpretation der Ergebnisse

Ein Hauptgrund für das negative Ergebnis der Studien scheint die unzureichende Bioverfügbarkeit und somit Wirksamkeit von oralem EGCG zu sein [80]. Es wurde nachgewiesen, dass 600 mg EGCG den Muskelstoffwechsel bei Personen mit MS [81] positiv beeinflusst. Die Plasmaspiegel von EGCG bei den einzelnen Personen in der SUNIMS-Studie waren jedoch trotz gleicher

Dosierung und standardisierten Bedingungen extrem unterschiedlich [46], ein Phänomen welches u.a. im Zusammenhang mit einer interindividuellen Variabilität in der Zusammensetzung des Mikrobioms diskutiert wird [82]. Unsere Dosierungen reichten somit aufgrund der unterschiedlichen Plasmakonzentrationen und damit Bioverfügbarkeit möglicherweise nicht aus, um bei allen Personen die erwarteten Wirkungen im ZNS zu entfalten. Letztlich wird die Bioverfügbarkeit von oral verabreichtem EGCG kontrovers diskutiert [79,80], und obwohl die Passage von EGCG durch die Blut-Hirn-Schranke (BHS) in Tierstudien nachgewiesen wurde [83], fehlt der Beweis für einen ZNS-Eintritt von EGCG beim Menschen.

Andererseits muss auch die Möglichkeit in Betracht gezogen werden, dass sich Polyphenone wie EGCG auf Hirnfunktionen, einschließlich komplexer Funktionen wie die Kognition, auswirken, ohne ausreichende Konzentrationen im ZNS zu erreichen [82], z.B. durch vaskuläre Effekte, wie Steigerung des zerebralen Blutflusses und der zerebralen Oxygenierung, wie in klinischen Studien gezeigt wurde [84].

4.3 Einbettung der Ergebnisse in den bisherigen Forschungsstand und Limitationen der Studien

Beide Studien (SUPREMES [44] und SUNIMS [46]) wurden als randomisierte, Placebo-kontrollierte, doppelt-verblindete Phase-II-Studien durchgeführt und die Wirksamkeit auf Krankheitsparameter und Sicherheit von EGCG bei Personen mit Multipler Sklerose untersucht. Die untersuchten primären und sekundären Endpunkte entsprechen denen von größeren Arzneimittelstudien bei aktuellen DMTs [19,28,85].

Eine Hauptlimitation beider Studien, insbesondere bei SUPREMES, ist die kleine Fallzahl, zusätzlich verbunden mit einer hohen Abbruchrate (hauptsächlich aufgrund persönlicher Gründe) bis zum Ende der Studie. Dies verbunden mit einer Überschätzung des Behandlungseffekts [86] bei der Berechnung der Stichprobengröße ist ein Hauptgrund für die negativen Ergebnisse der Studien. Eine post-hoc Power-Kalkulation hatte eine Anzahl von 1936 Personen pro Gruppe bei SUPREMES und 719 Personen pro Gruppe bei SUNIMS ergeben [44,46]. Diese Zahlen erscheinen für klinische Studien sehr hoch, liegen aber in der Größenordnung der Phase-III-Studien der zugelassenen Substanzen Teriflunomid [87] und Dimethylfumarat [88] mit jeweils $n > 1000$ Personen. Unsere Stichprobengrößen waren für die gegebene Effektstärke demnach viel zu klein.

Trotz tierexperimenteller Belege für die entzündungshemmenden und neuroprotektiven Eigenschaften von EGCG [40] könnten beim Menschen die neuroprotektiven Fähigkeiten überwiegen. Mehrere Fall-Kontroll- und Kohortenstudien in Nordamerika, Europa und Asien belegen zunehmend, dass der Konsum von grünem Tee das Risiko für neurodegenerative Erkrankungen wie

Alzheimer und Parkinson senkt [89,90]. In einer allerdings sehr kleinen Studie ohne Kontrollgruppe konnte bei den 10 MS Personen mit einer täglichen Gabe von 800 mg EGCG über 6 Monate ein Effekt von EGCG auf die N-Acetyl-Aspartat Level in der MR Spektroskopie gesehen werden, u.a. als Marker zur Wiederherstellung der mitochondrialen Funktion [91].

Eine kürzlich veröffentlichte kontrollierte klinische Phase-III-Studie bei Multisystematrophie konnte jedoch ebenfalls keinen Therapieeffekt von EGCG im Vergleich zu Placebo feststellen [92], trotz auch in diesem Fall vielversprechender grundlagenwissenschaftlicher und tierexperimenteller Daten [93].

Auch wir konnten mittels PBVC und zusätzlich der BPF in SUPREMES keinen Effekt von EGCG auf die Hirnatrophie nachweisen. Selbst in der kürzlich veröffentlichten MS-SMART-Studie, in der die Auswirkungen von drei verschiedenen neuroprotektiven Substanzen mit etwa 100 Personen pro Gruppe untersucht wurden, konnte kein Unterschied in der PBVC festgestellt werden [94]. Zudem könnte das Alter in der SUPREMES-Kohorte eine Rolle spielen für die fehlende Detektion eines Behandlungseffektes auf die Hirnatrophie. Es gibt neuerdings Hinweise für normale Alterseffekte, die ab dem 30. Lebensjahr nichtlinear ansteigen und eine MS-bedingte Hirnatrophie insbesondere im mittleren und höheren Lebensalter schwerer abgrenzen lassen [95].

OCT ist bisher in interventionellen Studien bei MS-Kohorten kein etablierter Outcome-Parameter. Dabei scheint OCT gegenüber MRT-Atrophie-Parametern einige Vorteile zu haben, z.B. der vermutlich geringere Alterseffekt [66]. In der kürzlich veröffentlichten multizentrischen OCTIMS-Studie [96] wurde bei über 300 Personen eine signifikante Assoziation zwischen dem Ausmaß der Hirnatrophie und der Verdünnung der GCIPL-Dicke über 3 Jahre gefunden, jedoch nicht mit der pRNFL-Dicke. Dieses Ergebnis ist im Einklang mit den Ergebnissen einer 4-Jahres-Studie [22], die nahelegt, dass die GCIPL-Atrophie den Schweregrad der Krankheitsaktivität und der Atrophie des gesamten Gehirns widerspiegeln könnte.

In SUPREMES wurden daher OCT-Parameter als explorative Endpunkte hinzugenommen [45]. Allerdings zeigten sich auch hier keine Gruppenunterschiede longitudinal. So konnte sich auch in dieser Analyse keine neuroprotektive Wirkung durch EGCG nachweisen lassen. Eine Limitation neben der sehr geringen Fallzahl besteht allerdings darin, dass die Behandlungsgruppen bei der Randomisierung auf Geschlecht und Diagnose und nicht auf OCT-Parameter stratifiziert wurden. Personen der Interventionsgruppe hatten so zufällig eine höhere GCIP- und INL-Dicke bei Baseline.

Ein weiterer möglicher Grund für das negative Ergebnis der Studien könnte in der Stabilität der Studienpopulation liegen. In der SUNIMS-Studie waren alle Personen vor der Verabreichung von EGCG unter einer stabilen GA-Behandlung, und nur etwa die Hälfte der Teilnehmer*innen hatte in den 12 Monaten vor Studieneinschluss einen Schub erlitten, was die Stabilität unserer RRMS-Studienpopulation belegt. Da beide Studiengruppen (GA + EGCG und GA + Placebo) während der Studie kaum Krankheitsaktivität (Zunahme der T2w-Läsionslast und Auftreten von Schüben)

aufwiesen, war es kaum möglich, bei diesem Design der add-on-Studie einen therapeutischen Effekt festzustellen.

Bei unserer SUPREMES-Kohorte handelte es sich um eine repräsentative Population von Personen mit PMS, einschließlich eines großen Anteils von schubfreien Personen und einem hohen Maß an bestehender Behinderung mit einem mittleren EDSS-Score von 6,0 bei Studienbeginn. Dennoch stellten wir in unserer Studienpopulation unerwartet eine jährliche Atrophierate (0,2-0,3 % pro Jahr anhand PBVC) fest, wie sie üblicherweise bei Gesunden beobachtet wird. Im Unterschied dazu wurde bei verschiedenen anderen PMS-Studien für Fingolimod [97], Siponimod [32], Lamotrigin [98], Ocrelizumab [19] oder Natalizumab [99] eine jährliche Atrophierate von 0,4-0,7 % detektiert. Nur zwei Studien mit PMS berichteten über eine ähnlich niedrige Atrophierate (Ibudilast [18] und Simvastatin (Verum-Arm) [100]). Die Möglichkeit, eine positive Wirkung einer Intervention nachzuweisen, hängt von einer angemessenen Dynamik der untersuchten Variable ab. Daher können wir vermuten, dass unsere PMS-Studienpopulation ebenfalls zu stabil war, um eine positive Wirkung auf die Verlaufsparemeter zu erkennen.

Obwohl Hepatotoxizität als potenziell schwerwiegende Nebenwirkung von Grüntee-Nahrungsergänzungsmitteln [101] und Polyphenon E (einem GTE) [91] diskutiert wurde, haben wir bei unserem EGCG-Dosierungsschema und der GA-Kombinationstherapie keine SAEs aufgrund Hepatotoxizität beobachtet. In unseren Studien brach nur jeweils ein Proband die Studie aufgrund erhöhter Leberenzyme ab. Eine mögliche Erklärung könnte sein, dass reines EGCG weniger hepatotoxisch ist als GTE oder Polyphenonen, die jeweils mehrere Arten von Polyphenolen enthalten. Unsere Studien waren auch hinsichtlich anderer organspezifischer Nebenwirkungen sicher, und die Teilnehmer*innen berichteten über eine gute Gesamtverträglichkeit von EGCG.

In der PROMESA-Studie [92] traten bei 8 von 47 Personen, die bis zu einer Höchstdosis von 1.200 mg EGCG über einen Zeitraum von bis zu 40 Wochen (insgesamt 48 Wochen einschließlich der Dosierungsphase) behandelt wurden, hepatotoxische Wirkungen (AEs) in Form von erhöhten Aminotransferasekonzentrationen auf, von denen 2 als SAEs (Aminotransferase-Konzentrationen größer als das Fünffache des oberen Grenzwerts) angesehen wurden. Die gleichzeitige Medikation mit u. a. Levodopa, welches selbst Leberenzymhöhung verursachen kann, und das um 10 Jahre höhere Durchschnittsalter der Personen im Vergleich zu unserer PMS-Kohorte, was möglicherweise mehr Begleiterkrankungen bedingt, könnten eine Erklärung für die schlechtere Verträglichkeit sein.

Kürzlich durchgeführte Studien berichteten über positive Auswirkungen von oral verabreichtem EGCG auf die kognitiven Funktionen in Kombination mit kognitivem Training bei Personen mit Down-Syndrom und Fragilem X-Syndrom [102,103]. Wir konnten keine positive Wirkung von EGCG auf den PASAT-Score in der SUNIMS-Studie feststellen. In unserer SUPREMES-Studie zeigte sich jedoch eine nicht-signifikante Veränderung (Differenz gegenüber dem Ausgangswert: EGCG 3,82 [SD 9,65], Placebo 1,00 [SD 5,79], $p = 0,051$ [44]). Diese Ergebnisse könnten darauf

hindeuten, dass EGCG eine positive Wirkung auf die kognitiven Funktionen von Personen mit PMS haben könnte. Dieses Ergebnis sollte mit Vorsicht interpretiert werden, da unsere Studie nicht speziell für die Auswertung dieses Tests konzipiert war. Da kognitive Störungen bei MS ein schwerwiegendes und bisher ungelöstes Problem darstellen [104], sollte die Wirkung von EGCG auf die Verbesserung der kognitiven Funktionen bei MS in einem differenzierteren Ansatz untersucht werden.

4.4 Zusammenfassung und Implikationen für zukünftige Forschung

EGCG war in einer Dosis von bis zu 800 mg täglich bei Personen mit RRMS als Zusatz zu GA über 18 Monate (SUNIMS [46]) und von bis zu 1200 mg täglich bei PMS-Personen über bis zu 48 Monate (SUPREMES [44]) sicher und gut verträglich. Es konnte jedoch keine neuroprotektive Wirkung auf MRT-, OCT- oder klinische Parameter der Krankheitsaktivität bei MS nachgewiesen werden. Zu den möglichen Erklärungen in beiden Studien gehören eine geringe Stichprobengröße, eine recht hohe Abbruchrate, eine Überschätzung der Effektgröße bei der Berechnung des Stichprobenumfangs und eine unzureichende EGCG-Dosierung bzw. eine zu geringe Bioverfügbarkeit der Substanz.

Es sollten daher weitere Studien zur Untersuchung der Wirkung von EGCG, insbesondere auf kognitive Funktionen in größeren MS-Kohorten, auch in adjuvanter Gabe, durchgeführt werden. Die Studien sollten mit EGCG-Formulierungen mit optimiertem Dosierungsschema, verbessertem Wirk- und Sicherheitsprofil und erhöhter Bioverfügbarkeit sowie mit ausreichend großer Personenanzahl durchgeführt werden. OCT-Verlaufparameter sollten neben MRT-Parametern als Outcome-Parameter bei PMS weiter etabliert werden, um Therapieeffekte von potentiellen Substanzen zu detektieren.

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Eidesstattliche Versicherung

„Ich, Rebekka Rust, versichere an Eides statt durch meine eigenhändige Unterschrift, dass ich die vorgelegte Dissertation mit dem Thema: „Epigallocatechin-Gallat bei verschiedenen Verlaufsformen der Multiplen Sklerose“

(engl.: „Epigallocatechin gallate in different disease courses of multiple sclerosis“)

selbstständig und ohne nicht offengelegte Hilfe Dritter verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel genutzt habe.

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Ich versichere ferner, dass ich die in Zusammenarbeit mit anderen Personen generierten Daten, Datenauswertungen und Schlussfolgerungen korrekt gekennzeichnet und meinen eigenen Beitrag sowie die Beiträge anderer Personen korrekt kenntlich gemacht habe (siehe Anteilserklärung). Texte oder Textteile, die gemeinsam mit anderen erstellt oder verwendet wurden, habe ich korrekt kenntlich gemacht.

Meine Anteile an etwaigen Publikationen zu dieser Dissertation entsprechen denen, die in der untenstehenden gemeinsamen Erklärung mit dem/der Erstbetreuer/in, angegeben sind. Für sämtliche im Rahmen der Dissertation entstandenen Publikationen wurden die Richtlinien des ICMJE (International Committee of Medical Journal Editors; www.icmje.org) zur Autorenschaft eingehalten. Ich erkläre ferner, dass ich mich zur Einhaltung der Satzung der Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin zur Sicherung Guter Wissenschaftlicher Praxis verpflichte.

Weiterhin versichere ich, dass ich diese Dissertation weder in gleicher noch in ähnlicher Form bereits an einer anderen Fakultät eingereicht habe.

Die Bedeutung dieser eidesstattlichen Versicherung und die strafrechtlichen Folgen einer unwahren eidesstattlichen Versicherung (§§156, 161 des Strafgesetzbuches) sind mir bekannt und bewusst.“

Datum

Unterschrift

Anteilserklärung an den erfolgten Publikationen

Rebekka Rust beteiligte sich an folgenden Publikationen:

Publikation 1: SUPREMES-Kohorte (Fragestellung 1a) [44]

R. Rust, C. Chien, M. Scheel, A.U. Brandt, J. Dörr, J. Wuerfel, K. Klumbies, H. Zimmermann, M. Lorenz, K.D. Wernecke, J. Bellmann-Strobl, F. Paul;
 Epigallocatechin Gallate in Progressive MS: A Randomized, Placebo-Controlled Trial, *Neurology: Neuroimmunology & Neuroinflammation*, 2021
 Journal Impact Factor: 7.724

Beitrag im Einzelnen:

Aufarbeitung, Bewertung und Überprüfung auf Vollständigkeit und Plausibilität aller klinischer Rohdaten aus den Personenakten und den Studienakten inkl. Prüfung der Ein- und Ausschlusskriterien, Erstellen der REDCap-Datenbank als Grundlage für die statistischen Analysen mit eigenständigem Eintrag unter enger Supervision von JBS aller Rohdaten, daraus Berechnung der jährlichen Schubraten sowie der MSFC-Scores und Subscores inkl. Z-Score, Erhebung des NEDA-Status sowie Interpretation der MRT- und OCT-Daten, Erstellen des statistischen Analyseprotokolls (Erstellen des Erstentwurfes) und dann weitere Überarbeitung und Fertigstellung des Analyseprotokolls in Zusammenarbeit mit KDW.

Teile der statistischen Analyse (deskriptive Statistik zur Studienkohorte, Baseline) unter Supervision von KDW und JBS.

Auf Grundlage der Datenbank erfolgten die Berechnungen zur Kohortenbeschreibung (Baseline), die vom Statistiker durchgeführten Analysen der Daten wurden auf Plausibilität und Vollständigkeit geprüft. Eigenständiges Erstellen aller Tabellen und des Consort-Diagramms. Interpretation aller Ergebnisse zusammen mit JBS und FP, Erstellung (Schreiben von Abstract, Introduction, Material and Methods, Results, Discussion und References) sowie Überarbeitung des Manuskripts inkl. aller Tabellen, des Consort-Diagramms und Mitarbeit beim Erstellen der Graphiken.

Publikation 2: SUPREMES-Kohorte (Fragestellung 1b) [45]

K. Klumbies, R. Rust, J. Dörr, F. Konietschke, F. Paul, J. Bellmann-Strobl, A.U. Brandt, H. Zimmermann; Retinal thickness analysis in progressive multiple sclerosis patients treated with epigallocatechin gallate: optical coherence tomography results from the SUPREMES study, *Frontiers in Neurology*, 2021
 Journal Impact Factor: 2.889

Beitrag im Einzelnen:

Erstellen der Datenbank zur Beschreibung der Studienkohorte, Bewertung der klinischen Daten, Interpretation aller Ergebnisse, Überarbeitung des gesamten Manuskripts.

Publikation 3 SUNIMS-Kohorte (Fragestellung 2) [46]

J. Bellmann-Strobl, F. Paul, J. Wuerfel, J. Dörr, C. Infante-Duarte, E. Heidrich, B. Körtgen, A. Brandt, C. Pfüller, H. Radbruch, R. Rust, V. Siffrin, O. Aktas, C. Heesen, J. Faiss, F. Hoffmann, M. Lorenz, B. Zimmermann, S. Groppa, K.-D. Wernecke, F. Zipp; Epigallocatechin Gallate in Relapsing-Remitting Multiple Sclerosis: A Randomized, Placebo-Controlled Trial, *Neurology: Neuroimmunology & Neuroinflammation*, 2021

Journal Impact Factor: 7.724

Beitrag im Einzelnen:

Mithilfe bei der Erstellung der Subgruppenanalysen und Erfassen des NEDA-Status. Interpretation der klinischen Daten und aller Ergebnisse, Überarbeitung des gesamten Manuskripts.

Unterschrift, Datum und Stempel des/der erstbetreuenden Hochschullehrers/in

Unterschrift der Doktorandin

Druckexemplare der Publikationen

R. Rust, C. Chien, M. Scheel, A.U. Brandt, J. Dörr, J. Wuerfel, K. Klumbies, H. Zimmermann, M. Lorenz, K.D. Wernecke, J. Bellmann-Strobl, F. Paul;
Epigallocatechin Gallate in Progressive MS: A Randomized, Placebo-Controlled Trial, *Neurology: Neuroimmunology & Neuroinflammation*, 2021
Journal Impact Factor: 7.724

Journal Data Filtered By: **Selected JCR Year: 2019** Selected Editions: SCIE,SSCI
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Gesamtanzahl: 271 Journale

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2	NATURE NEUROSCIENCE	62,933	20.071	0.144390
3	BEHAVIORAL AND BRAIN SCIENCES	9,395	17.333	0.008170
4	TRENDS IN COGNITIVE SCIENCES	27,705	15.218	0.036050
5	JOURNAL OF PINEAL RESEARCH	10,537	14.528	0.009430
6	NEURON	95,056	14.415	0.199640
7	ACTA NEUROPATHOLOGICA	21,908	14.251	0.040740
8	TRENDS IN NEUROSCIENCES	20,011	12.891	0.021220
9	Annual Review of Neuroscience	13,215	12.547	0.012740
10	MOLECULAR PSYCHIATRY	22,227	12.384	0.054730
11	Nature Human Behaviour	2,457	12.282	0.014190
12	BIOLOGICAL PSYCHIATRY	44,016	12.095	0.053910
13	BRAIN	53,282	11.337	0.067050
14	SLEEP MEDICINE REVIEWS	8,077	9.613	0.013000
15	Molecular Neurodegeneration	4,933	9.599	0.011840
16	PROGRESS IN NEUROBIOLOGY	12,791	9.371	0.011250
17	FRONTIERS IN NEUROENDOCRINOLOGY	4,491	9.059	0.007050
18	ANNALS OF NEUROLOGY	37,304	9.037	0.044120
19	NEUROSCIENCE AND BIOBEHAVIORAL REVIEWS	28,873	8.330	0.051900
20	Neurology-Neuroimmunology & Neuroinflammation	2,232	7.724	0.008400
21	NEUROPATHOLOGY AND APPLIED NEUROBIOLOGY	3,992	7.500	0.005960

ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS CLASS OF EVIDENCE

Epigallocatechin Gallate in Progressive MS

A Randomized, Placebo-Controlled Trial

Rebekka Rust, MD, Claudia Chien, MSc, Michael Scheel, MD, Alexander U. Brandt, MD, Jan Dörr, MD, Jens Wuerfel, MD, Katharina Klumbies, MD, Hanna Zimmermann, PhD, Mario Lorenz, PhD, Klaus-Dieter Wernecke, PhD, Judith Bellmann-Strobl, MD,* and Friedemann Paul, MD*

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Abstract

Objective

To examine whether treatment with epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG) influences progression of brain atrophy, reduces clinical and further radiologic disease activity markers, and is safe in patients with progressive multiple sclerosis (PMS).

Methods

We enrolled 61 patients with primary or secondary PMS in a randomized double-blind, parallel-group, phase II trial on oral EGCG (up to 1,200 mg daily) or placebo for 36 months with an optional open-label EGCG treatment extension (OE) of 12-month duration. The primary end point was the rate of brain atrophy, quantified as brain parenchymal fraction (BPF). The secondary end points were radiologic and clinical disease parameters and safety assessments.

Results

In our cohort, 30 patients were randomized to EGCG treatment and 31 to placebo. Thirty-eight patients (19 from each group) completed the study. The primary endpoint was not met, as in 36 months the rate of decrease in BPF was 0.0092 ± 0.0152 in the treatment group and -0.0078 ± 0.0159 in placebo-treated patients. None of the secondary MRI and clinical end points revealed group differences. Adverse events of EGCG were mostly mild and occurred with a similar incidence in the placebo group. One patient in the EGCG group had to stop treatment due to elevated aminotransferases (>3.5 times above normal limit).

Conclusions

In a phase II trial including patients with multiple sclerosis (MS) with progressive disease course, we were unable to demonstrate a treatment effect of EGCG on the primary and secondary radiologic and clinical disease parameters while confirming an overall beneficial safety profile.

Clinicaltrial.gov Identifier

NCT00799890.

Classification of Evidence

This phase II trial provides Class II evidence that for patients with PMS, EGCG was safe, well tolerated, and did not significantly reduce the rate of brain atrophy.

MORE ONLINE

→ Class of Evidence

Criteria for rating therapeutic and diagnostic studies

[NPub.org/coe](https://www.npub.org/coe)

*Contributed equally to the manuscript as co-senior authors.

From the Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin (R.R., C.C., M.S., A.U.B., J.D., K.K., H.Z., M.L., K.-D.W., J.B.-S., F.P.), Berlin, Germany; and Jens Würfel, University Basel, Basel, Switzerland. Go to [Neurology.org/NN](https://www.neurology.org/NN) for full disclosures. Funding information is provided at the end of the article.

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Glossary

AAR = annualized atrophy rate; **AE** = adverse event; **ARR** = annualized relapse rate; **BBB** = blood-brain barrier; **BDI** = Becks Depression Inventory I; **BPF** = brain parenchymal fraction; **CDP** = confirmed disability progression; **EAE** = experimental autoimmune encephalomyelitis; **EDSS** = Expanded Disability Status Scale; **EGCG** = epigallocatechin gallate; **FSS** = Fatigue Severity Scale; **GMV** = gray matter volume; **GTE** = green tea extract; **ITT** = intention to treat; **MFIS** = Modified Fatigue Impact Scale; **MS** = multiple sclerosis; **MSFC** = MS Functional Composite; **OCT** = optical coherence tomography; **OE** = open-label extension; **PAS** = primary analysis set; **PASAT** = Paced Auditory Serial Addition Test; **PBVC** = Percentage Brain Volume Change; **PMS** = progressive MS; **PP** = per protocol; **PPMS** = primary progressive MS; **RRMS** = relapsing-remitting MS; **SAE** = serious adverse event; **SPMS** = secondary progressive MS; **TIV** = total intracranial volume; **WMV** = white matter volume.

Safe and effective treatment options with neuroprotective properties for progressive MS (PMS) are an unmet clinical need.¹ In contrast to many approved therapies for the relapsing course,^{2,3} there are only the monoclonal antibody ocrelizumab⁴ for primary progressive MS (PPMS) and the chemotherapy agent mitoxantrone as well as newly the sphingosine 1-phosphate receptor modulator siponimod⁵ for the treatment of secondary progressive MS (SPMS).

One of the main goals for PMS treatment is to slow progression of neurologic impairment arising from permanent tissue injury¹ often evaluated by the degree of brain atrophy.⁶

Epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGCG) is a polyphenolic green tea catechin⁷ with anti-inflammatory and neuroprotective properties demonstrated in animal and ex vivo studies.^{8,9} In experimental autoimmune encephalomyelitis (EAE), an animal model of MS, it was shown to reduce brain inflammation and neuronal damage by influencing T-cell proliferation, inhibiting the activation of nuclear factor- κ B (NF- κ B), and exerting antioxidant effects.¹⁰⁻¹²

Its approval as a dietary supplement with a satisfactory long-term safety profile¹³ could make EGCG an attractive treatment for patients with PMS with possible neuroprotective effects.

The present study investigated the effect of EGCG on brain atrophy, further radiologic parameters, and clinical disease activity and safety aspects in patients with PMS during a 36-month double-blind treatment period. This study was extended by an optional open-label period (OE) for another 12 months.

Methods

Primary Research Question

This monocentric, prospective, phase II, double-blinded, parallel-group, randomized controlled trial was designed to evaluate the question whether the oral intake of up to 1,200 mg EGCG reduces the rate of brain atrophy in patients with PMS and is safe and well tolerated. The study was conducted in Berlin, Germany, from May 2009 to February

2016. The study is rated Class II because less than 80% of enrolled patients completed the study.

Patients

Eligibility criteria comprised fulfillment of the 2005 revised McDonald criteria for MS¹⁴ and the diagnosis of PPMS or SPMS, age between 18 and 65 years, Expanded Disability Status Scale (EDSS)¹⁵ score of 3 to 8 at screening, and a relapse-free period of at least 30 days before randomization. No MS disease-modifying therapy was allowed.

Key exclusion criteria were a relapsing-remitting form of MS, a major systemic or CNS disease, especially such as Parkinson, Huntington, or Alzheimer disease as well as clinically relevant predefined laboratory abnormalities (aminotransferases >3.5 times above normal limit), and intake of any potentially hepatotoxic medication. Additional consumption of green tea or green tea extract (GTE) was prohibited.

Standard Protocol Approvals, Registrations, and Participant Consents

The study was approved by the local ethics committees (LaGeSo ZS EK 10 407/08, new: 08/0407-EK 15) and by the German Federal Institute for Drugs and Medical Devices (BfArM). This trial is registered with EudraCT (2008-005213-22) and clinicaltrials.gov (NCT00799890). It was conducted according to the Declaration of Helsinki in its applicable version, and every participant provided written informed consent before screening.

Data Availability

As far as permitted according to data protection requirements and consent provided by the participants, original data are available from the corresponding author on request from any qualified investigator within 5 years after publication.

Randomization and Blinding

To account for potential baseline data imbalances, patients were stratified before randomization for sex (female and male) and diagnosis (PPMS and SPMS). Patients were randomly (1:1) assigned to receive either Sunphenon/EGCG capsules (GTE containing >90% EGCG, product of Taiyo International, taiyointernational.com) or capsules of placebo with identical appearance.

A block randomization list was generated by the independent pharmacy to assign patients either to EGCG or to placebo for 36 months.

Only the pharmacist was aware of treatment allocation throughout the study; all staff and patients remained blinded to treatment allocation with the exception of 1 patient who was prematurely unblinded by having the study medication analyzed in an external laboratory at his own discretion. This led to the patient's exclusion from the study.

Following the blinded randomized part of the study (until month 36), the patients were offered the opportunity to participate in another 12-month OE, in which all patients received EGCG.

Procedures

Following randomization, patients started treatment with EGCG or placebo capsules 200 mg daily. Divided into 2 doses, they were escalated after 3 months to 400 mg daily, after 6 months to 600 mg daily, after 18 months to 800 mg, and after 30 months to 1,200 mg daily until the end of the study at month 36.

Patients initially treated with placebo and decided to participate in the 12-month OE started treatment with EGCG capsules 200 mg daily, then escalated every 2 weeks with 200 mg, reaching 1,200 mg after 10 weeks. For the patients treated with EGCG, the dosage was maintained during OE, until month 48 if they participated.

Patients received containers with EGCG capsules or placebo sufficient until the next study visit. At each of these visits, drug accountability was performed (number of taken capsules).

Standardized neurologic assessments including EDSS¹⁵ and MS Functional Composite (MSFC)^{16,17} consisting of 9-Hole Peg Test, timed 25-foot walk test, and Paced Auditory Serial Addition Test (PASAT) were performed by a blinded and especially trained examiner at the initial screening (which was at most 1 week before randomization), then every 6 months, and at every unscheduled visit when a relapse was suspected. To avoid any training effect in the PASAT, each participant underwent at least 3 test scorings before study scoring.

At baseline and at month 36, fatigue and depressive symptoms were assessed by the Fatigue Severity Scale (FSS)¹⁸ and Modified Fatigue Impact Scale (MFIS)¹⁹ as well as Becks Depression Inventory I (BDI).²⁰ An optical coherence tomography (OCT) was also performed every 12 months.

Safety assessments included reporting of adverse events (AEs), medical examinations, and laboratory examinations. Visits were scheduled every 2–3 months and with short-term follow-up in case of pathologic results.

MRI Data Acquisition and Analysis

MRI was performed on one 1.5 Tesla scanner (Sonata Siemens, Erlangen, Germany). The MRI protocol included a

T2w fluid-attenuated inversion recovery sequence (TR/TE = 10,000/108 ms, $0.5 \times 0.5 \times 3 \text{ mm}^3$, no gap) and a high-resolution 3D T1-weighted sequence (magnetization prepared rapid acquisition gradient echo, MPRAGE: TR/TE = 2110/4.38 ms, $1 \times 1 \times 1 \text{ mm}^3$), before and after IV contrast agent administration. Brain parenchymal fraction (BPF), percent brain volume change (PBVC), and T2w hyperintense lesions were quantified at screening and months 12, 24, and 36, whereas contrast-enhancing T1-weighted lesions (CELS) were quantified at screening and month 36.

Brain atrophy was assessed from lesion infilled MPRAGE images using 2 approaches. BPF was assessed for each time point using the CAT12 software package (version 12.5—neuro.uni-jena.de/cat/). Here, gray matter volume (GMV) and white matter volume (WMV) and total intracranial volume (TIV) were segmented and visually checked for segmentation errors. BPF was calculated as follows: $BPF = (GMV + WMV)/TIV$. Atrophy was then calculated as the difference between baseline and subsequent time points. In an additional approach, the PBVC was quantified longitudinally using the SIENA pipeline (FMRIB software package, FSL Version 5.0.9).²¹

T2w lesion load and CELs were manually segmented using ITK-SNAP.²² Lesions were infilled in MPRAGE images using the FSL lesion filling tool (FMRIB software package, FSL Version 5.0.9).²¹

Primary and Secondary Outcomes

The primary outcome was the change of BPF²³ from baseline to month 36. Secondary MRI outcome measures were PBVC²¹ at month 36, increase (difference from month 36 to baseline) in number and volume of all T2-weighted (T2w) hyperintense lesions, and the number and volume of CELs at month 36. Secondary outcomes of OCT are reported in detail elsewhere.

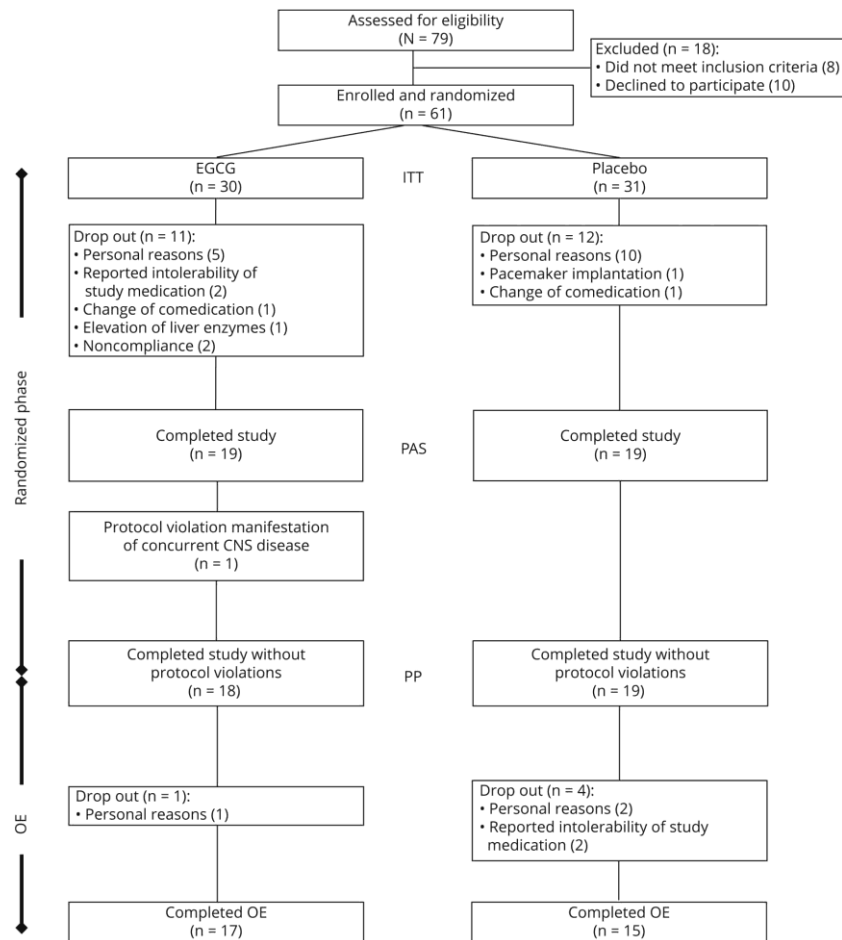
Secondary clinical outcome measurements were disability progression as measured by EDSS and confirmed disability progression (CDP) defined as a 1-point increase in the EDSS if the baseline score was 3.0–5.5, or a 0.5-point increase if the baseline score was 6.0 and above, confirmed at a scheduled visit 6 months later. Further secondary clinical outcome parameters were annualized relapse rate (ARR), MSFC, BDI, FSS, and MFIS.

Safety assessments were also part of the secondary outcomes. At the end of the OE, the primary and secondary outcome parameters were assessed again.

Statistical Analysis

The study was initially planned as a double-blind adaptive pilot study for the inclusion of an initial total of 60 patients with subsequent sample size recalculation.²⁴ The latter was not performed due to recruitment difficulties. At the end of the blinded phase (after 36 months), the study was unblinded, resulting in 61 patients altogether (30 randomized to verum

Figure 1 Consort Diagram



ITT = intention-to-treat population; OE = open-label extension; PAS = primary analysis set; PP = per-protocol population.

and 31 randomized to placebo) and an OE implemented (compare CONSORT diagram, figure 1).

Results are expressed as arithmetic mean \pm SD, median (range), or frequencies (%). The primary end point BPF was assessed using the exact Mann-Whitney test.

Continuous secondary endpoints were tested for differences between groups by using the nonparametric (exact) Mann-Whitney test for independent groups. Differences in categorical variables were tested by the Fisher exact test.

Differences between the verum and placebo group with respect to the whole time course were analyzed using

nonparametric analysis of longitudinal data in a 2-factorial design²⁵ (first factor (independent): treatment groups, second factor (dependent): study visits). This cumulates in 3 tests: differences in groups, significant changes in time, and interactions between groups and time. When appropriate, multivariate, nonparametric analysis of covariance²⁶ using baseline values as covariates was complemented.

Because of the large number of missings and lost to follow-up, we abstained from a full data set analysis according to the intention-to-treat (ITT) principle. Instead, we used a modified ITT approach, in which we excluded patients in both groups who dropped out of the study (primary analysis set [PAS], 38 patients). In addition, a per-protocol analysis (PP,

Table 1 MRI Outcome Parameters After 36 Months (Primary Analysis Set)

	EGCG (n = 19)	Placebo (n = 19)	p Value
BPF	0.6943 (0.0502)	0.6867 (0.0439)	0.608 ^a
Change from baseline	0.0092 (0.0152)	0.0078 (0.0159)	0.670 ^a
Median	0.7040 (0.6000 to 0.7710)	0.6840 (0.6020 to 0.7560)	
Percent brain volume change	-0.5659 (0.9818)	-0.8013 (1.1996)	0.603 ^a
Median	-0.5869 (-2.3057 to 0.9561)	-0.9600 (-2.4856 to 0.9701)	
No. of T2w lesions	35.21 (16.84)	39.32 (19.28)	0.501 ^a
Change from baseline	1.52 (4.23)	3.78 (4.88)	0.146 ^a
Median	30 (8 to 63)	39 (5 to 76)	
Volume of T2w lesions (mL)	17.57 (16.47)	16.90 (17.30)	0.773 ^a
Change from baseline (mL)	1.04 (1.48)	0.52 (2.36)	0.043 ^a
Median	11.65 (1.64 to 64.63)	12.20 (0.91 to 67.98)	
No. of CELs^b	0.00 (0.00)	0.13 (0.34)	0.964 ^a
Median	0 (0 to 0)	0 (0 to 1)	
Volume of CELs (mL)^b	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)	0.984 ^a
Median	0.00 (0.00 to 0.00)	0 (0.00 to 0.04)	

Abbreviations: BPF = brain parenchymal fraction; CEL = contrast-enhancing lesion; EGCG = epigallocatechin-3-gallate.

Data are mean (SD) or median (range).

^a Exact Mann-Whitney test.

^b Number and volume of CELs for 18 patients of EGCG and 16 patients of the placebo group.

37 patients) was performed, omitting patients who severely violated study protocol (see CONSORT diagram, figure 1).

A *p* value <0.05 was considered statistically significant. All tests of secondary end points were conducted as exploratory data analysis. Therefore, no adjustments for multiple testing were made.

Numerical calculations were performed using SAS version 9.4 [TS1M3] copyright 2002-2012 by SAS Institute Inc., Cary, NC, IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 25, Copyright 1989, 2010 SPSS Inc., an IBM Company, Chicago, IL, and The R Project for Statistical Computing, Version 3.0.2 (2017-04-21).

Results

Patients

Sixty-one participants were randomly assigned to receive either EGCG (n = 30) or placebo (n = 31) (figure 1). The EGCG and placebo group were similar for all baseline variables (table e-1, links.lww.com/NXI/A420). Thirty-seven percent of patients in the EGCG group and 39% of those in the placebo group had primary progressive disease; the others had secondary progressive disease. All included patients were of Caucasian ethnicity.

Thirty-eight patients (19 from each group) completed the study and were analyzed for the primary outcome. Twenty-

three patients (11 EGCG [36.7%] and 12 placebo [38.7%]) withdrew from treatment (figure 1), mainly for personal reasons or change of comedication.

In the EGCG group, 2 patients reported partial intolerance to the study medication (not specified) and discontinued the study (dropout), and 1 patient dropped out due to elevated aminotransferases (>3.5 times above normal limit), which normalized after seizing medication. Reduction of study drug dosage was not required in any other patient.

All participants completing the full 36 months had a compliance of at least 80% when evaluating intake of study medication.

MRI Outcomes

The results of the ITT analyses for the MRI outcome parameters are summarized in table 1. Regarding the primary end point difference BPF (BPF [baseline–month 36]), we observed no difference between groups (EGCG = 0.0092 [SD 0.0152]; placebo = 0.0078 [SD 0.0159]; *p* = 0.670), giving annualized atrophy rates (AARs) of 0.31% for verum and 0.26% for the placebo group (difference 0.05%).

Regarding secondary end points at month 36, the EGCG and the placebo group did not differ in PBVC (*p* = 0.603, giving AAR of 0.19% for verum and 0.27% for placebo

Table 2 Clinical Outcome Parameters After 36 Months (Primary Analysis Set)

	EGCG	Placebo	p Value
EDSS	n = 19	n = 20	
Mean	6.08 (1.07)	5.73 (1.12)	0.098 ^a
Change from baseline	0.26 (0.45)	0.57 (0.99)	0.421 ^a
Median	6.5 (3.0–8.0)	6.0 (3.5–8.0)	
Annualized relapse rate	n = 19	n = 20	
Mean	0.24 (0.46)	0.19 (0.44)	0.513 ^a
Progression by EDSS	n = 18	n = 19	
Number	6 (33.3%)	8 (42.1%)	0.737 ^b
MS functional composite (z-score)	n = 12	n = 15	
Mean	0.56 (0.45)	0.07 (0.75)	0.931 ^a
Change from baseline	0.16 (0.37)	-0.13 (0.38)	0.126 ^a
Paced Auditory Serial Addition test	n = 17	n = 20	
Mean	51.35 (10.95)	42.05 (14.90)	0.051 ^a
Change from baseline	3.82 (9.65)	1.00 (5.79)	0.292 ^a
9-Hole Peg Test in s (average)	n = 16	n = 19	
Mean	27.64 (11.36)	31.27 (8.32)	0.117 ^a
Change from baseline	1.48 (7.94)	3.00 (6.82)	0.172 ^a
Timed 25-Foot Walk Test in s (average)	n = 14	n = 16	
Mean	14.19 (10.61)	10.98 (8.07)	0.275 ^a
Change from baseline	1.99 (9.00)	0.23 (5.85)	0.880 ^a
FSS	n = 10	n = 11	
Mean	4.41 (2.07)	4.54 (1.76)	0.931 ^a
Change from baseline	-0.90 (1.86)	-0.38 (1.96)	0.813 ^a
MFIS	n = 18	n = 19	
Mean	38.89 (21.65)	34.11 (13.59)	0.412 ^a
Change from baseline	-3.76 (12.63)	2.06 (12.11)	0.178 ^a
BDI	n = 18	n = 18	
Mean	9.78 (7.37)	9.00 (6.37)	0.820 ^a
Change from baseline	0.13 (4.98)	0.41 (5.17)	0.610 ^a

Abbreviations: BDI = Beck Depression Inventory; EDSS = Expanded Disability Status Scale; EGCG = epigallocatechin-3-gallate; FSS = Fatigue Severity Scale; MFIS = Modified Fatigue Impact Scale.

Data are mean (SD), number (%) or median (range).

^a Exact Mann-Whitney test.

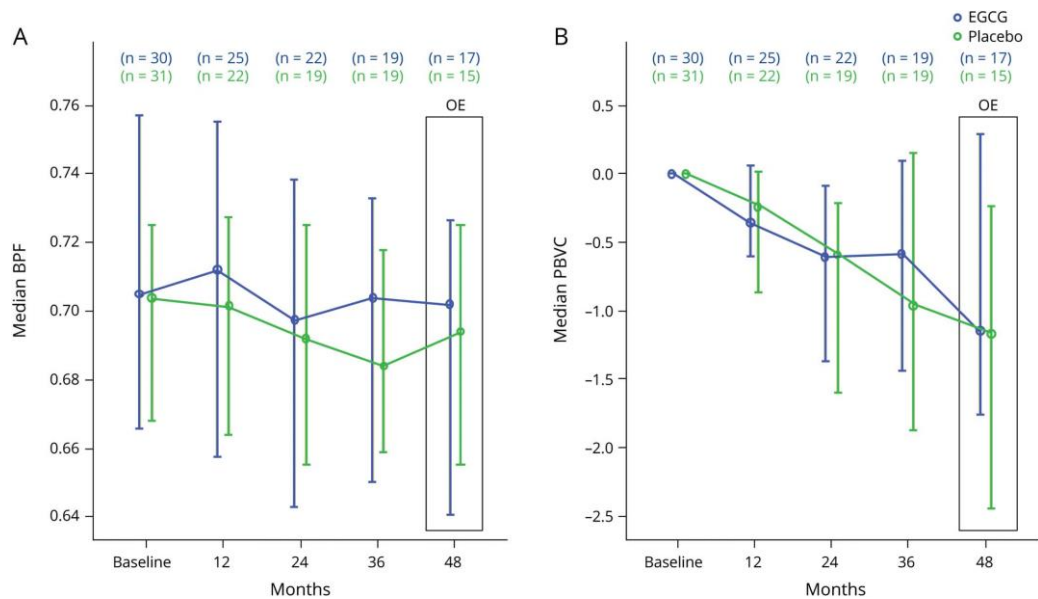
^b Exact χ^2 test.

(difference 0.08%), T2w lesion count and volume, and in CELs (table 1).

Clinical Outcomes

When evaluating clinical end points (table 2), we found no difference between groups in EDSS, CDP, the mean change in EDSS between baseline and at month 36, MSFC and its

subscores, and BDI as well as fatigue scores. Eighteen of 27 patients (66.67%) in the EGCG and 20/28 patients (71.43%) in the placebo group were relapse free during the study. The ARR until month 36 and CDP were similar in both groups. There was no difference between EGCG and placebo in the ARR between baseline and month 18 and between months 18 and 36 (data not shown).

Figure 2 Multivariate Longitudinal Analysis of Brain Atrophy Over 48 Months

(A) Primary outcome: brain parenchymal fraction; only a significant effect of time was observed ($p < 0.001$), no group difference ($p = 0.520$) and no interaction ($p = 0.647$). (B) Secondary outcome: percentage brain volume change; significant effect of time ($p < 0.001$), no group difference ($p = 0.0476$), and no interaction ($p = 0.807$). Bars represent 25%–75% quartiles. EGCG = epigallocatechin-3-gallate; OE = open-label extension.

The results of the PP analyses concerning primary and all secondary outcome parameters did not differ from those of the PAS analyses (data not shown).

Subgroup Analyses

In performed subgroup analyses for patients with lower and higher BPF (\leq median BPF vs $>$ median BPF at baseline) and for patients with and without CEL during the study, the change in brain atrophy was not significantly different between groups. Also in subgroups with clinically milder disease (EDSS score <5) and in patients with lower Individual Progression Index (EDSS/years of symptoms), we could not detect a difference for the primary end point.

Furthermore, no sex effects were found relating to PBVC, BPF, and EDSS.

Longitudinal Analyses

Longitudinal analyses of the entire time course²⁵ including all available time points (0, 12, 24, and 36 months) also showed no difference in MRI and clinical parameters for the primary and secondary end points. These findings were confirmed by longitudinal covariance analyses²⁴ (see multivariate longitudinal analysis for brain atrophy in figure 2 and T2w lesions in figure 3).

Safety

Of the 30 participants in the EGCG group 29 (96.7%) and of the 31 participants in the placebo group, 28 (90.3%)

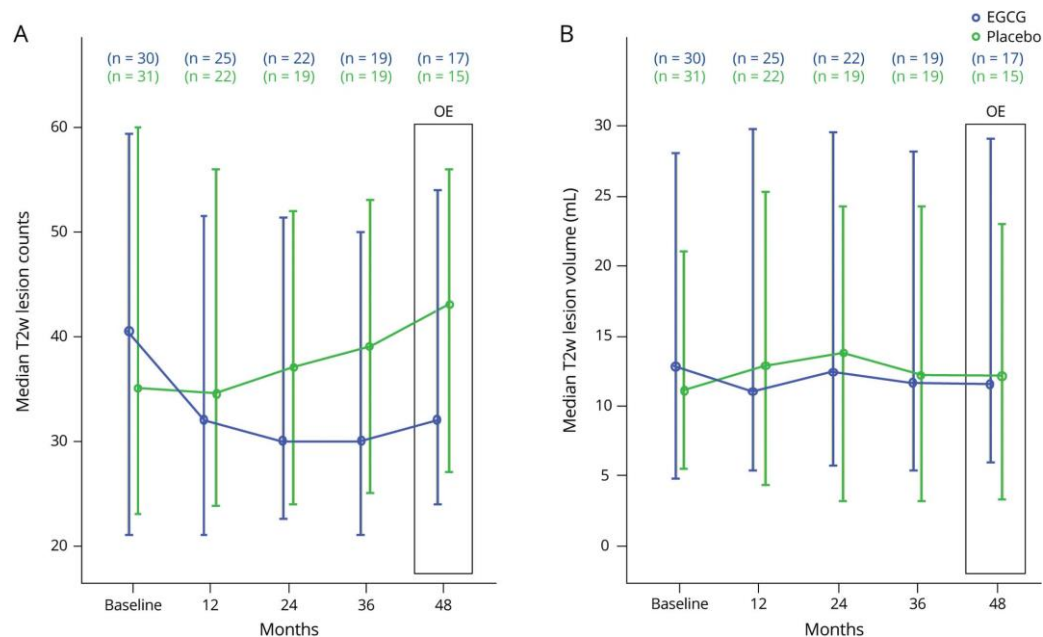
experienced 1 or more AEs. Eleven (36.7%) in the EGCG and 10 (32.3%) in the placebo group had a serious adverse event (SAE). None of the SAEs were considered related to the study drug. All occurred due to hospitalization of study participants for various reasons (table e-2, [links.lww.com/NXI/A420](https://www.nx1.com/NXI/A420)).

The incidence of SAEs and AEs was similar in both study groups. The most common AEs ($>3\%$) were flu-like infections, urinary tract infections, fractures and contusions after falling, and elevated liver enzymes, without statistical difference between groups.

Open-Label Extension

Seventeen patients from the EGCG group and 15 patients from the former placebo group were available for follow-up assessments at the end of OE. At month 48, there were no significant differences in BPF (BPF former EGCG = 0.6911, BPF former placebo group = 0.6879; $p = 0.860$). PBVC and clinical progression parameters (EDSS, MSFC, and subscales) showed no significant difference between former groups and to the randomized phase of the study (data of the OE not shown).

During OE, AEs and SAEs were similar to the randomized phase, especially no elevation of liver enzymes or other hepatotoxic side effects occurred. However, 2 patients reported intolerability of study medication and decided to stop treatment.

Figure 3 Multivariate Longitudinal Analysis of T2w Lesions Over 48 Months

(A) Secondary outcome: median T2w lesion counts; a significant effect of time was observed ($p < 0.001$), no group difference ($p = 0.582$) and no interaction ($p = 0.417$). (B) Secondary outcome: median T2w lesion volume in mL; significant effect of time ($p < 0.001$), no group difference ($p = 0.821$), and no interaction ($p = 0.324$). Bars represent 25%–75% quartiles. EGCG = epigallocatechin gallate; OE = open-label extension.

Discussion

This randomized, placebo-controlled trial failed to show an effect of oral EGCG on radiographic (brain atrophy, T2w lesions) and clinical (EDSS, relapses, and MSFC) disease progression in patients with SPMS or PPMS. These results challenge preclinical data suggesting a neuroprotective and anti-inflammatory capacity of EGCG in an animal study with EAE¹⁰ where it was shown that orally applied EGCG decreased T-cell proliferation and TNF α production of encephalitogenic T-cells via suppression of NF- κ B activation and inhibited neuronal cell death by interference with reactive oxygen species formation. These findings provided the rationale for putative antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects of EGCG also in human CNS. However, our results are in line with a study on EGCG in multiple system atrophy²⁷ and another study from our group that did not find an effect of oral EGCG on T2w lesion evolution, PBVC, and clinical disease measures in patients with relapsing-remitting MS (RRMS).²⁸

A key issue of the negative outcome of our study seems to be the small sample size of the study. With only 61 patients included and a dropout rate of more than 30% (mostly due to personal reasons and less to side effects), our study was underpowered and the effect size was overestimated from the

beginning as we have learned meanwhile.²⁹ A post hoc power calculation revealed a number of 1936 patients per group needed to detect the given effect size = 0.092 with a power of 80% and a type 1 error (α) of 5% (2 sided). With the 19 patients per group of our specific cohort, it would only be possible to detect a high effect size = 1.00.

Even in the recently published MS-SMART Study, investigating the effects of 3 different neuroprotective substances with about 100 patients per group, no difference in PBVC could be detected.³⁰

Our cohort was a representative population of patients with PMS, including a large proportion of patients who were in a nonrelapsing stage of PMS and had a high level of established disability with a median EDSS score of 6.0 at study entry. Nevertheless, we unexpectedly detected a nonpathologic annual PBVC rate (0.2–0.3% per year) in our study population in comparison to various other PMS trials examining the effect of fingolimod,³¹ siponimod,⁵ lamotrigine,³² ocrelizumab,⁴ or natalizumab,³³ reporting an annual atrophy rate of 0.4–0.7%, disregarding the verum and placebo group. Only 2 studies with PMS reported a similarly low atrophy rate (ibudilast⁶ and simvastatin/verum arm³⁴). The possibility to prove a positive effect of an intervention depends on adequate

dynamics of the investigated variable. Therefore, we may speculate that our study population was too stable to detect a beneficial effect on radiographic disease progression markers.

Another possible reason for the negative outcome seems to be the insufficient bioavailability of oral EGCG in the doses used in these studies.³⁵ Previous studies had reported doses of up to 800 mg EGCG per day as safe and generally well tolerated, e.g., in healthy volunteers, where the plasma elimination half-life of EGCG was measured to be about 5 hours after repeated administration of 800 mg EGCG daily over 10 days.³⁶ Therefore, we chose a maximum daily dose of 800 mg EGCG until month 30, a maximum daily dose of 1,200 mg until month 36, and for the optional OE until month 48. Evidence was found that 600 mg EGCG beneficially influences muscle metabolism in patients with MS¹¹; however, our dosages were not sufficient to achieve an effect in the CNS. Recently, a new study proposed the bioavailability of EGCG to be less than 1% in humans from ingestion, with a clearance from the systemic circulation within a few hours.⁷ Although we did not measure plasma levels of EGCG in this study, our previous study in RRMS showed that plasma levels of EGCG are extremely variable across patients despite equal dosing.²⁸ Moreover, although passage of EGCG through the blood-brain barrier (BBB) was shown in animal studies,⁷ proof of CNS entry of EGCG in humans is lacking.

In comparison to, e.g., the ocrelizumab ORATORIO trial (baseline: median EDSS score 4.5), the disease duration and the EDSS were higher in our study. Furthermore, active progression just before study entry was not mandatory for our trial. The nature of the EDSS as an ordinal scale results in scores that are unequally distributed, and the individuals remain at a step in the scale for different lengths of time, especially at higher EDSS scores despite progressive disability.³⁷ The considerations may explain why in a clinically stable cohort with high disability levels, subtle positive effects of EGCG at certain EDSS levels could not be demonstrated.

Although hepatotoxicity has been discussed as a potentially severe side effect of green tea dietary supplements¹³ and Polyphenon,³⁸ we did not observe any related SAE with our EGCG dosing regimen. In our study, only 1 subject dropped out due to elevated liver enzymes. Also, in our study on EGCG in RRMS, no relevant liver toxicity occurred.²⁸ A possible explanation could be that pure EGCG is less harmful than GTE or Polyphenon regarding hepatotoxicity. GTE and Polyphenon contain several types of polyphenols. However, in the PROMESA study, 8 of 47 patients treated with EGCG up to a maximum dose of 1,200 mg for up to 40 weeks (48 weeks in total including the dosage phase) experienced hepatotoxicity. This was determined as increased aminotransferase concentrations of which 2 were regarded as SAEs (aminotransferase concentrations greater than 5 times the upper limit).²⁷ The concomitant medication with among others levodopa (which itself may cause elevated liver enzymes) and the mean age of the patients being 10 years older

than in the MS studies (possibly leading to more concomitant diseases) may be an explanation for worse tolerability.

Recent studies reported beneficial effects of orally applied EGCG on cognitive functions in combination with cognitive training in patients with Down syndrome and fragile X syndrome.^{39,40} Our study also found an improvement of the PASAT score in both study groups, favoring EGCG (change from baseline: EGCG 3.82 [SD 9.65], placebo 1.00 [SD 5.79]; p value = 0.051). The PASAT measures cognitive function such as calculation ability, auditory information processing speed, and flexibility. These findings may suggest that EGCG could have a positive effect on the cognitive functions of patients with PMS. Training effects of the PASAT due to 3 test scorings before the study are unlikely. However, this result should be interpreted carefully because it was observed as a statistical trend and our study was not designed to evaluate this outcome specifically.

EGCG at a dose of up to 1,200 mg daily was overall safe and well tolerated in patients with PMS over a period of 36 months and a 12-month open-label extension. However, we did not find an effect of treatment on MRI or clinical disease activity parameters. Possible explanations include the small sample size and the high dropout rate. First indications were found that EGCG treatment may beneficially affect cognitive functions also in MS. Thus, further investigation in larger MS cohorts may be warranted, especially for improvement of cognitive functions with adjuvant treatment. Such studies should consider using optimized formulations of EGCG for increased bioavailability and ideally with proven BBB passage.

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Disclosure

R. Rust reports speaking fees from Roche, unrelated to this study; J. Wuerfel reports no conflict in respect to this work; he is employee of MIAC AG, Basel, Switzerland; he participated in advisory boards (Biogen, Idorsia, Novartis, Roche, and Sanofi) and is supported by the EU (Horizon2020). J. Doerr reports research support from Bayer and Novartis, honoraria for lectures and advisory from Bayer, Novartis, Sanofi Aventis, Merck Serono, Biogen, and Roche, and travel support from Bayer, Novartis, Biogen, and Merck Serono. H.G. Zimmermann received research grants from Novartis and speaking fees from Bayer, unrelated to this study. A.U. Brandt is co-founder and shareholder of technology startups Motognosis GmbH and Nocturne GmbH; he is named as inventor on

several patent applications describing serum biomarkers for multiple sclerosis, perceptive computing for motor symptoms and retinal image analysis using optical coherence tomography. J. Bellmann-Strobl reports nonfinancial support from Bayer HealthCare, grants from Biogen Idec and Merck Serono, and personal fees from Teva GmbH, Sanofi Genzyme, Roche, and Novartis, outside the submitted work. F. Paul reports nonfinancial support from Taiyo International, grants from Teva GmbH, and other from the German Research Council (DFG), during the conduct of the study; he serves on scientific advisory boards of Novartis OCTIMS study steering committee and MedImmune/Viela Bio steering committee; he received funding for travel or speaker honoraria from Bayer, Novartis, Biogen Idec, Teva, Sanofi Aventis/ Genzyme, Merck Serono, Alexion, Chugai, MedImmune, Shire, Roche, Actelion, and Celgene and serves on editorial boards of *PLoS One* (academic editor) and *Neurology Neuroimmunology and Neuroinflammation* (Associate Editor); he provided consultancies for Sanofi Genzyme, Biogen Idec, MedImmune, Shire, and Alexion; he received research support from Bayer, Novartis, Biogen Idec, Teva, Sanofi-Aventis/Genzyme, Alexion, and Merck. Go to Neurology.org/NN for full disclosures.

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Claudia Chien, MSc	Charité–Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Berlin, Germany	Analyzed and interpreted the data and revised the manuscript for intellectual content
Michael Scheel, MD	Charité–Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Berlin, Germany	Analyzed the data and revised the manuscript for intellectual content
Alexander U. Brandt, MD	Charité–Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Berlin, Germany	Major role in the acquisition of data and revised the manuscript for intellectual content
Jan Dörr, MD	Charité–Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Berlin, Germany	Designed and conceptualized the study; major role in the acquisition of data; and revised the manuscript for intellectual content
Jens Würfel, MD	University Basel, Basel, Switzerland	Designed and conceptualized the study and revised the manuscript for intellectual content

Appendix (continued)

Name	Location	Contribution
Katharina Klumbies, MD	Charité–Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Berlin, Germany	Major role in the acquisition of data; analyzed the data; and revised the manuscript for intellectual content
Hanna G. Zimmermann, PhD	Charité–Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Berlin, Germany	Major role in the acquisition of data; analyzed the data; and revised the manuscript for intellectual content
Mario Lorenz, PhD	Charité–Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Berlin, Germany	Interpreted the data and revised the manuscript for intellectual content
Klaus-Dieter Wernecke, PhD	Charité–Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Berlin, Germany	Analyzed the data and drafted the manuscript for intellectual content
Judith Bellmann-Strobl, MD	Charité–Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Berlin, Germany	Major role in the acquisition of data; analyzed and interpreted the data; and drafted the manuscript for intellectual content
Friedemann Paul, MD	Charité–Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Berlin, Germany	Designed and conceptualized the study; major role in the acquisition of data; analyzed and interpreted the data; and revised the manuscript for intellectual content

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4	TRENDS IN COGNITIVE SCIENCES	27,705	15.218	0.036050
5	JOURNAL OF PINEAL RESEARCH	10,537	14.528	0.009430
6	NEURON	95,056	14.415	0.199640
7	ACTA NEUROPATHOLOGICA	21,908	14.251	0.040740
8	TRENDS IN NEUROSCIENCES	20,011	12.891	0.021220
9	Annual Review of Neuroscience	13,215	12.547	0.012740
10	MOLECULAR PSYCHIATRY	22,227	12.384	0.054730
11	Nature Human Behaviour	2,457	12.282	0.014190
12	BIOLOGICAL PSYCHIATRY	44,016	12.095	0.053910
13	BRAIN	53,282	11.337	0.067050
14	SLEEP MEDICINE REVIEWS	8,077	9.613	0.013000
15	Molecular Neurodegeneration	4,933	9.599	0.011840
16	PROGRESS IN NEUROBIOLOGY	12,791	9.371	0.011250
17	FRONTIERS IN NEUROENDOCRINOLOGY	4,491	9.059	0.007050
18	ANNALS OF NEUROLOGY	37,304	9.037	0.044120
19	NEUROSCIENCE AND BIOBEHAVIORAL REVIEWS	28,873	8.330	0.051900
20	Neurology-Neuroimmunology & Neuroinflammation	2,232	7.724	0.008400
21	NEUROPATHOLOGY AND APPLIED NEUROBIOLOGY	3,992	7.500	0.005960

Rank	Full Journal Title	Total Cites	Journal Impact Factor	Eigenfactor Score
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23	NEUROPSYCHOPHARMACOLOGY	26,281	6.751	0.040680
24	npj Parkinsons Disease	662	6.750	0.002500
25	BRAIN BEHAVIOR AND IMMUNITY	16,285	6.633	0.028560
26	Brain Stimulation	6,537	6.565	0.015580
27	NEUROSCIENTIST	5,188	6.500	0.007220
28	Acta Neuropathologica Communications	4,070	6.270	0.014730
29	CURRENT OPINION IN NEUROBIOLOGY	14,959	6.267	0.028730
30	Alzheimers Research & Therapy	3,876	6.116	0.011650
31	Neurotherapeutics	4,998	6.035	0.009520
32	GLIA	14,220	5.984	0.017250
33	NEUROIMAGE	102,632	5.902	0.125360
34	Annual Review of Vision Science	601	5.897	0.003700
35	Molecular Autism	2,510	5.869	0.007450
36	Journal of Neuroinflammation	13,709	5.793	0.025870
37	Translational Stroke Research	2,274	5.780	0.004520
38	JOURNAL OF CEREBRAL BLOOD FLOW AND METABOLISM	19,492	5.681	0.024230
39	JOURNAL OF NEUROSCIENCE	167,114	5.673	0.181170
40	BRAIN PATHOLOGY	5,308	5.568	0.007020
41	Translational Neurodegeneration	1,030	5.551	0.002790
42	NEURAL NETWORKS	14,065	5.535	0.018910
43	PAIN	37,753	5.483	0.035730

Rank	Full Journal Title	Total Cites	Journal Impact Factor	Eigenfactor Score
44	Multiple Sclerosis Journal	11,792	5.412	0.019460
45	BIPOLAR DISORDERS	4,838	5.410	0.006610
46	Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience	3,842	5.397	0.005280
47	Biological Psychiatry-Cognitive Neuroscience and Neuroimaging	1,361	5.335	0.005880
48	NEUROBIOLOGY OF DISEASE	17,200	5.332	0.023770
49	Brain Connectivity	2,431	5.263	0.005180
50	Journal of Parkinsons Disease	2,244	5.178	0.005810
51	CEREBRAL CORTEX	30,815	5.043	0.056030
52	Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience	3,177	4.966	0.010180
53	CEPHALALGIA	11,053	4.868	0.011970
54	NEUROPSYCHOLOGY REVIEW	3,114	4.840	0.004050
55	SLEEP	22,296	4.805	0.024610
56	JOURNAL OF HEADACHE AND PAIN	3,898	4.797	0.007600
57	PSYCHONEUROENDOCRINOLOGY	19,287	4.732	0.027100
58	JOURNAL OF NEUROSCIENCE RESEARCH	13,098	4.699	0.010490
59	EXPERIMENTAL NEUROLOGY	20,154	4.691	0.020070
60	Molecular Brain	2,785	4.686	0.006510
61	Current Neuropharmacology	4,178	4.668	0.006280
62	JOURNAL OF PAIN	10,887	4.621	0.015040
63	JOURNAL OF PHYSIOLOGY-LONDON	50,045	4.547	0.037090
64	EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF NEUROLOGY	11,015	4.516	0.017330
65	MOLECULAR NEUROBIOLOGY	15,297	4.500	0.031350

Rank	Full Journal Title	Total Cites	Journal Impact Factor	Eigenfactor Score
66	ACS Chemical Neuroscience	6,881	4.486	0.015300
67	Fluids and Barriers of the CNS	1,331	4.470	0.002240
68	NEUROPHARMACOLOGY	21,682	4.431	0.033110
69	HUMAN BRAIN MAPPING	23,094	4.421	0.042760
70	JOURNAL OF PSYCHIATRY & NEUROSCIENCE	3,297	4.382	0.004290
71	Current Neurology and Neuroscience Reports	3,429	4.376	0.006810
72	Nature and Science of Sleep	728	4.375	0.001970
73	Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience	9,063	4.362	0.026120
74	PROGRESS IN NEURO-PSYCHOPHARMACOLOGY & BIOLOGICAL PSYCHIATRY	11,179	4.361	0.013670
75	NEUROBIOLOGY OF AGING	23,002	4.347	0.032570
76	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF NEUROPSYCHOPHARMACOLOGY	6,749	4.333	0.011150
77	Neuroscience Bulletin	2,338	4.326	0.004870
78	NEUROENDOCRINOLOGY	4,958	4.271	0.004820
79	CURRENT OPINION IN NEUROLOGY	5,437	4.207	0.008280
80	ASN Neuro	984	4.167	0.001580
81	Journal of Neural Engineering	7,240	4.141	0.011940
82	Journal of Neuroimmune Pharmacology	2,809	4.113	0.003520
83	CNS Neuroscience & Therapeutics	3,598	4.074	0.005870
84	JOURNAL OF NEUROCHEMISTRY	34,378	4.066	0.021840
85	Frontiers in Molecular Neuroscience	6,721	4.057	0.020190
86	NUTRITIONAL NEUROSCIENCE	2,110	4.028	0.002640
87	CORTEX	10,979	4.009	0.022870

Rank	Full Journal Title	Total Cites	Journal Impact Factor	Eigenfactor Score
88	Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences	2,507	3.990	0.012580
89	Developmental Neurobiology	3,049	3.935	0.006120
90	Cognitive Neurodynamics	988	3.925	0.001690
91	Frontiers in Cellular Neuroscience	11,389	3.921	0.034000
92	JOURNAL OF ALZHEIMERS DISEASE	23,214	3.909	0.048080
93	NEUROCHEMISTRY INTERNATIONAL	8,928	3.881	0.008010
94	EUROPEAN NEUROPSYCHOPHARMACOLOGY	7,597	3.853	0.013120
95	JOURNAL OF NEUROTRAUMA	15,388	3.793	0.021530
96	Frontiers in Neuroscience	17,395	3.707	0.049650
97	HEARING RESEARCH	11,072	3.693	0.012480
98	PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGY	14,586	3.692	0.012670
99	Annals of Clinical and Translational Neurology	2,571	3.660	0.011170
100	JOURNAL OF SLEEP RESEARCH	5,945	3.623	0.007370
101	CELLULAR AND MOLECULAR NEUROBIOLOGY	4,732	3.606	0.006190
102	Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience	7,347	3.571	0.019570
103	eNeuro	3,237	3.544	0.015940
104	Journal of NeuroEngineering and Rehabilitation	5,164	3.519	0.008430
105	JOURNAL OF NEURAL TRANSMISSION	7,111	3.505	0.007930
106	EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF PAIN	7,579	3.492	0.009730
107	Journal of Neurodevelopmental Disorders	1,342	3.487	0.003300
108	HIPPOCAMPUS	8,587	3.404	0.010830
109	GENES BRAIN AND BEHAVIOR	3,639	3.397	0.005080

Rank	Full Journal Title	Total Cites	Journal Impact Factor	Eigenfactor Score
110	BRAIN RESEARCH BULLETIN	9,714	3.370	0.007920
111	REVIEWS IN THE NEUROSCIENCES	2,211	3.358	0.002840
112	PSYCHIATRY AND CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCES	3,696	3.351	0.004260
113	Brain Sciences	1,994	3.332	0.004980
114	NEUROINFORMATICS	1,457	3.300	0.003170
115	Brain Structure & Function	6,749	3.298	0.020660
116	Frontiers in Systems Neuroscience	4,943	3.293	0.012720
117	Frontiers in Neuroanatomy	3,672	3.292	0.011730
118	NEUROTOXICOLOGY AND TERATOLOGY	3,700	3.274	0.003460
119	CLINICAL NEUROPHYSIOLOGY	19,764	3.214	0.020260
120	MOLECULAR AND CELLULAR NEUROSCIENCE	6,348	3.182	0.005770
121	Neural Regeneration Research	4,834	3.171	0.009500
122	Frontiers in Neural Circuits	3,428	3.156	0.010970
123	PSYCHOPHARMACOLOGY	22,417	3.130	0.019820
124	CEREBELLUM	3,076	3.129	0.005430
125	JOURNAL OF NEUROIMMUNOLOGY	10,508	3.125	0.009210
126	JOURNAL OF PSYCHOPHARMACOLOGY	6,262	3.121	0.009340
127	EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF NEUROSCIENCE	24,806	3.115	0.018730
127	JOURNAL OF THE NEUROLOGICAL SCIENCES	18,170	3.115	0.022200
127	NEUROMUSCULAR DISORDERS	4,882	3.115	0.008260
130	JOURNAL OF COGNITIVE NEUROSCIENCE	16,520	3.105	0.015590
130	NEUROTOXICOLOGY	7,022	3.105	0.007110

Rank	Full Journal Title	Total Cites	Journal Impact Factor	Eigenfactor Score
132	STRESS-THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL ON THE BIOLOGY OF STRESS	2,915	3.102	0.004100
133	NEURAL PLASTICITY	4,271	3.093	0.011330
134	Purinergic Signalling	1,979	3.065	0.002350
135	NEUROSCIENCE	44,404	3.056	0.044770
136	Current Alzheimer Research	4,243	3.047	0.006240
137	DEVELOPMENTAL NEUROSCIENCE	2,190	3.041	0.002050
138	NEUROCHEMICAL RESEARCH	9,819	3.038	0.011300
139	ACTA NEUROPSYCHIATRICA	930	3.000	0.001790
139	Cognitive Neuroscience	628	3.000	0.001540
139	VISUAL NEUROSCIENCE	2,228	3.000	0.001320
142	NEUROTOXICITY RESEARCH	3,384	2.992	0.004030
143	BEHAVIOURAL BRAIN RESEARCH	26,293	2.977	0.030780
144	CLINICAL AUTONOMIC RESEARCH	1,674	2.968	0.001880
145	NEUROGASTROENTEROLOGY AND MOTILITY	7,567	2.946	0.011780
146	JOURNAL OF NEUROPATHOLOGY AND EXPERIMENTAL NEUROLOGY	9,263	2.923	0.007160
147	NEUROLOGIC CLINICS	2,443	2.910	0.003310
148	Frontiers in Neurology	9,998	2.889	0.028270
149	JOURNAL OF NEUROENDOCRINOLOGY	5,853	2.886	0.005310
150	JOURNAL OF VESTIBULAR RESEARCH-EQUILIBRIUM & ORIENTATION	1,305	2.816	0.001640
151	BMC NEUROSCIENCE	4,722	2.811	0.004530
152	JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE NEUROLOGY	29,259	2.801	0.014500
153	NEUROBIOLOGY OF LEARNING AND MEMORY	7,356	2.768	0.013440



Retinal Thickness Analysis in Progressive Multiple Sclerosis Patients Treated With Epigallocatechin Gallate: Optical Coherence Tomography Results From the SUPREMES Study

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Background: Epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG) is an anti-inflammatory agent and has proven neuroprotective properties in animal models of multiple sclerosis (MS). Optical coherence tomography (OCT) assessed retinal thickness analysis can reflect treatment responses in MS.

Objective: To analyze the influence of EGCG treatment on retinal thickness analysis as secondary and exploratory outcomes of the randomized controlled *Sunphenon in Progressive Forms of MS* trial (SUPREMES, NCT00799890).

Methods: SUPREMES patients underwent OCT with the Heidelberg Spectralis device at a subset of visits. We determined peripapillary retinal nerve fiber layer (pRNFL) thickness from a 12° ring scan around the optic nerve head and thickness of the ganglion cell/inner plexiform layer (GCIPL) and inner nuclear layer (INL) within a 6 mm diameter grid centered on the fovea from a macular volume scan. Longitudinal OCT data were available for exploratory analysis from 31 SUPREMES participants (12/19 primary/secondary progressive MS (PPMS/SPMS); mean age 51 ± 7 years; 12 female; mean time since disease onset 16 ± 11 years). We tested the null hypothesis of no treatment*time interaction using nonparametric analysis of longitudinal data in factorial experiments.

Results: After 2 years, there were no significant differences in longitudinal retinal thickness changes between EGCG treated and placebo arms in any OCT parameter

(Mean change [confidence interval] ECGC vs. Placebo: pRNFL: -0.83 [1.29] μm vs. -0.64 [1.56] μm , $p = 0.156$; GCIP: -0.67 [0.67] μm vs. -0.14 [0.47] μm , $p = 0.476$; INL: -0.06 [0.58] μm vs. 0.22 [0.41] μm , $p = 0.455$).

Conclusion: Retinal thickness analysis did not reveal a neuroprotective effect of EGCG. While this is in line with the results of the main SUPREMES trial, our study was probably underpowered to detect an effect.

Clinical Trial Registration: www.ClinicalTrials.gov, identifier: NCT00799890.

Keywords: optical coherence tomography, retina, progressive multiple sclerosis, treatment response, epigallocatechin gallate

INTRODUCTION

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is the most common autoimmune inflammatory and degenerative central nervous system (CNS) disease, often resulting in sustained neurological deficits (1). The majority of patients manifest with a relapsing remitting (RRMS) disease course (2, 3), followed by a secondary progressive (SPMS) stage ~ 20 years from onset (4). However, 15–20% show a primary progressive (PPMS) disease course from onset (3, 5, 6). Neurodegeneration may be present in any course from the onset of the disease (7–10).

The principle of disease modifying therapy (DMT) aims at decreasing relapse frequency and disability progression. Whereas various immunomodulatory drugs for the treatment of RRMS targeting the inflammatory aspect of the disease have been established in the last decades (11), treatment options for progressive MS are sparse (12, 13). Furthermore, due to the absence of clinical relapses, treatment response is difficult to measure in progressive MS and has to rely on measures not primarily associated with relapse activity (13).

Green tea anti-inflammatory, anti-oxidative, and anti-carcinogenic effects have been shown on various conditions such as energy metabolism, cell development, and neuroprotection (14–17). The most active agent is the polyphenol epigallocatechin-gallate (EGCG), comprising 50–80% of the total catechins in green tea (18). EGCG has shown immunomodulatory effects by inhibition of T cell proliferation and thus modulates the production of T cell-derived cytokines, e.g., Interferon- γ , Interleukin-2, and tumor necrosis factor (TNF) α (from T helper type 1 cell subset) (19–21). In an experimental animal model of MS (experimental autoimmune encephalomyelitis, EAE) the oral intake of EGCG suppressed inflammation via inhibition of TNF α and nuclear factor kappa-light-chain-enhancer of activated B cells in T cells, thus resulting in reduced clinical disease severity and fewer CNS lesions in mice (22–24). Furthermore, treatment with EGCG and glatiramer acetate in EAE mice delayed disease onset, reduced clinical disability and reduced inflammatory infiltrates (25). In clinical trials, oral intake of EGCG was associated with improved muscle metabolism during moderate exercise in RRMS (26) and improved cognitive rehabilitation in genetic disorders (27, 28).

Optical coherence tomography (OCT) allows quantification of anterior visual pathway damage in MS patients (29–33).

While thinning of the peripapillary retinal nerve fiber layer (pRNFL), containing unmyelinated axons, and the ganglion cell layer, containing their cell bodies, reflect neuroaxonal atrophy as a consequence of retrograde neurodegeneration, the inner nuclear layer (INL) is associated with inflammation manifesting in thickening and edema (31, 34–40). The ganglion cell layer is usually—due to similar contrast on OCT images—analyzed in combination with the inner plexiform layer (GCIP). RNFL and GCIP changes are found even during early stages of MS and occur also in absence of a history of optic neuritis (ON) (8, 41–44). Response to DMT is reflected by decreased rates of GCIP thinning (45) and thinning of INL in RRMS patients (46). A recent study has shown faster retinal thinning—also compared to RRMS patients and no effect of DMT on thinning rates in progressive MS (47). The study has been discussed controversially (48).

The SUPREMES study (Sunphenon in progressive forms of multiple sclerosis) was a phase 2 monocentric, prospective, randomized double-blind placebo-controlled pilot study to evaluate the effect of EGCG/Sunphenon on brain atrophy in MRI over a period of 36 months in patients with primary and secondary progressive multiple sclerosis (NCT00799890). The primary results of the SUPREMES study have been published elsewhere (49). OCT parameters were assessed as secondary and exploratory outcomes. The aim of our study was to evaluate the impact of EGCG on longitudinal retinal component changes in patients with progressive MS.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Patients and Study Design

In total, 61 patients were randomized to the SUPREMES trial (NCT00799890) at the NeuroCure Clinical Research Center (NCRC) at Charité—Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Germany. Inclusion and exclusion criteria, randomization, blinding process and primary and secondary endpoints are described in detail elsewhere (49). Primary outcome parameter of the main study was brain atrophy detected as the difference between brain parenchymal fraction after 36 months compared to baseline. Inclusion criteria were age between 18 and 65 years, diagnosis of primary progressive or secondary progressive multiple sclerosis according to the McDonald criteria version 2005 (50), expanded disability status scale (EDSS)

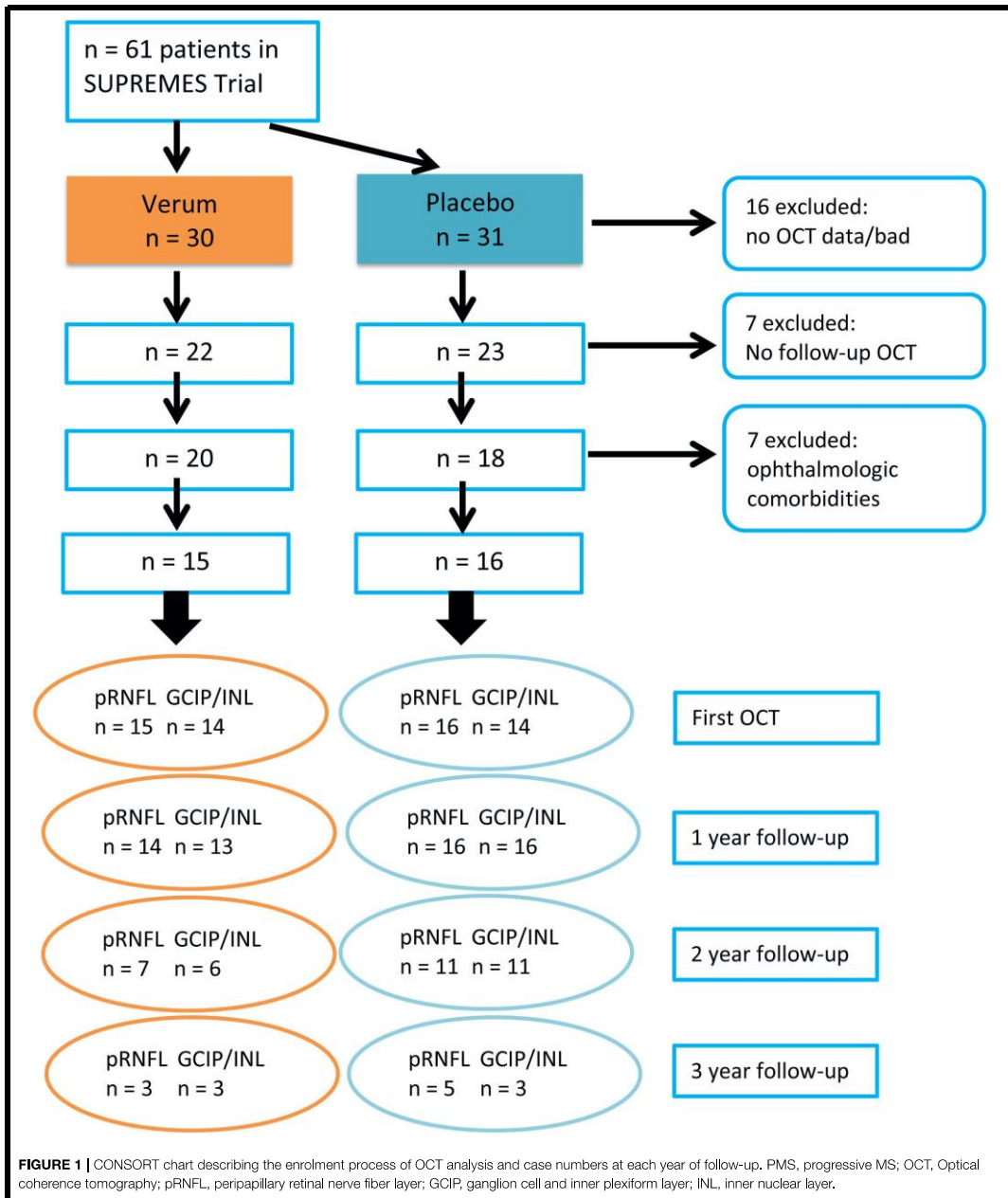


TABLE 1 | Baseline cohort description.

	EGCG	Placebo	<i>p</i>
<i>n</i>	15	16	
Age [years]	50.8 ± 8.4	50.7 ± 6.9	0.968
Sex female [n (%)]	5 (33.3)	7 (43.8)	0.821
Diagnosis			>0.999
PPMS [n (%)]	6 (40.0)	6 (37.5)	
SPMS [n (%)]	9 (60.0)	10 (62.5)	
Disease duration [years] (median, [IQR])	13.69 [8.90, 29.41]	12.12 [7.47, 20.17]	0.406
EDSS (median, IQR)	6.00 [4.00, 6.50]	5.75 [4.00, 6.00]	0.138
Time on trial at OCT baseline (median, IQR) [years]	1.06 [0.00, 1.50]	1.04 [0.00, 1.53]	0.919
Follow-up duration (median, IQR) [years]	1.47 [1.27, 2.01]	1.95 [1.47, 2.90]	0.213

Abbreviations: EGCG: epigallocatechin-gallate, SPMS: secondary progressive multiple sclerosis, PPMS: primary progressive multiple sclerosis, EDSS: Expanded disability status scale, IQR: interquartile range, OCT: optical coherence tomography.

TABLE 2 | First OCT measurements.

	EGCG		Placebo		EGCG vs. placebo <i>p</i>
	Mean ± SD	RTE	Mean ± SD	RTE	
pRNFL/μm	87.3 ± 11.1	0.554	82.9 ± 11.4	0.450	0.297
GCIPL/μm	65.4 ± 7.4	0.609	59.9 ± 6.1	0.381	0.024
INL/μm	37.8 ± 2.2	0.599	36.1 ± 2.3	0.392	0.049

Test statistics from "nonparametric analysis of longitudinal data" of first examination OCT data. EGCG, epigallocatechin-gallate; CI, confidence interval; RTE, Relative treatment effect; pRNFL, peripapillary retinal nerve fiber layer; GCIPL, ganglion cell and inner plexiform layer; INL, inner nuclear layer.

(51) between 3.0 and 8.0 and at least 30 days between the last exacerbation and study screening. Exclusion criteria were treatment with any immunomodulatory or immunosuppressive drugs, with exception of methylprednisolone up to 3 months before screening. Regarding OCT, pRNFL was a secondary outcome parameter; GCIPL and INL were analyzed as exploratory endpoints. For inclusion in the analysis of OCT, ophthalmological diseases such as glaucoma, recurrent iritis, myopia < -5 dpt were considered as additional exclusion criteria. As for many patients OCT scanning was not available in the beginning, we only included patients to the OCT analysis who had at least one follow-up OCT at least 6 months from baseline OCT.

Study Medication

Patients in the treatment arm started treatment with one capsule containing Sunphenon 200 mg/day and placebo patients received identical capsules without active component. After 3 months, participants received two capsules per day of either EGCG or placebo medication. After 6 months, the medication increased to 600 mg/day, after 18 months to 800 mg/day and after 30 months they received the full amount of 1,200 mg/day.

Ethics

The SUPREMES trial was approved by the local ethics committee (LaGeSo ZS EK 10 407/08, new: 08/0407-EK 15) and by

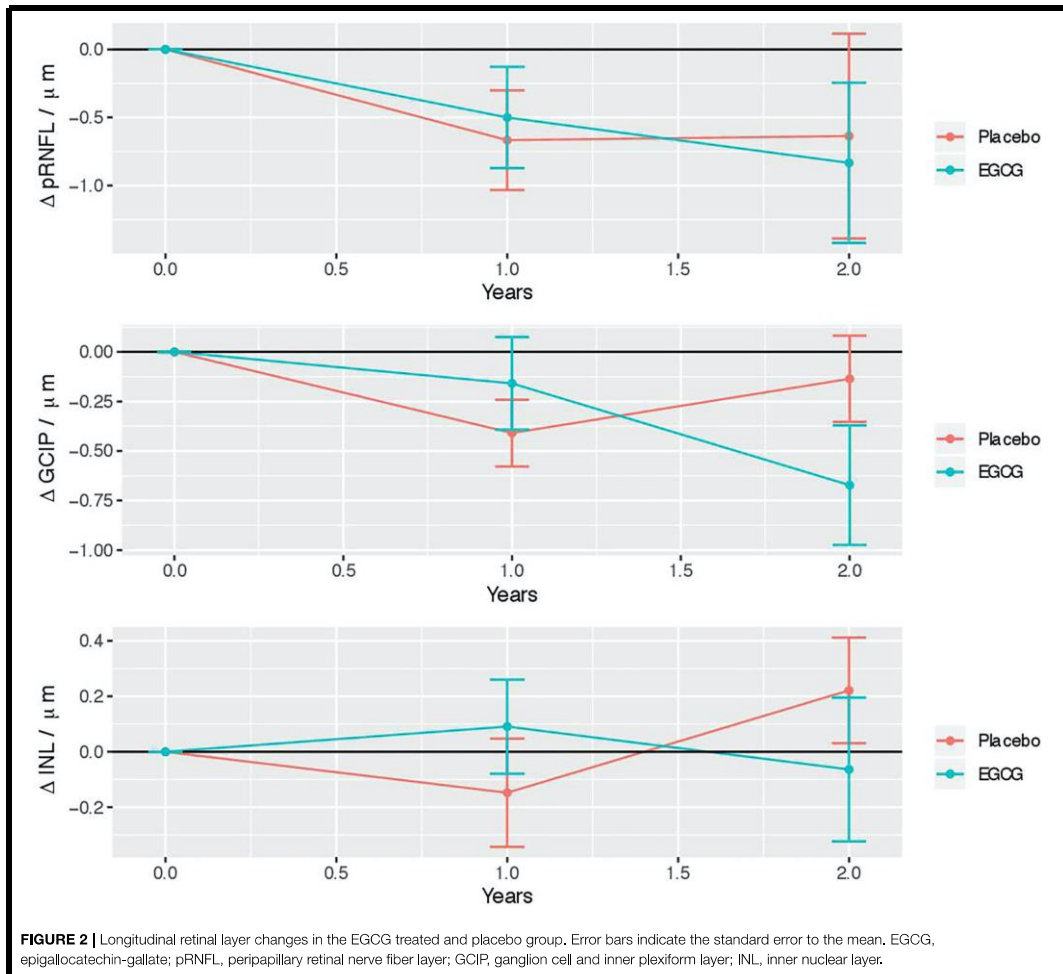
the German Federal Institute for Drugs and Medical Devices (BfArM). The trial is registered with EudraCT (2008-005213-22) and clinicaltrials.gov (NCT00799890) and was conducted in accordance with the current version of the Declaration of Helsinki and the applicable German law. All subjects provided written informed consent prior to enrolment.

Optical Coherence Tomography

Patients underwent spectral domain OCT (Spectralis SD-OCT; Heidelberg Engineering, Heidelberg, Germany) with the Eye Explorer 1.9.10.0 and automatic real-time (ART) image averaging. pRNFL was calculated from a standard ring scan around the optic nerve head (12°, 1536 A-scans, 16 ≤ ART ≤ 100) using segmentation by the device's software with viewing module 6.0.14.0. A macular volume scan (25° × 30°, 61 B-scans, 768 A-scans per B-scan, 12 ≤ ART ≤ 15) was acquired for intraretinal segmentation of GCIPL and INL. Segmentation of macular scans was performed with SAMIRIX (52). All OCT scans were revised for retinal changes unrelated to MS, sufficient quality (53, 54), segmentation errors and were manually corrected by a blinded experienced grader if necessary. OCT methods are reported in line with the APOSTEL criteria (55).

Statistical Methods

Cohort baseline differences with subject reference in numerical variables were either given as mean ± standard deviation and analyzed with *t*-test, or as median and interquartile range (IQR) and analyzed with Wilcoxon rank-sum test, while Chi-Square test was applied for categorical variables. Due to overall low sample size and high number of missing data (Figure 1) we tested the OCT first examination and the longitudinal main hypothesis with "nonparametric analysis of longitudinal data in factorial experiments" as implemented in the R package nparLD (56). We modeled first OCT examination within an F1-LD-F1 design and used the ANOVA-Type test with treatment arm as whole-plot factor and eye as sub-plot factor for inference. We performed longitudinal analysis within the F1-LD-F2 experimental design with one whole-plot factor and two sub-plot factors, where the second sub-plot factor is the stratification of the first. Using this design, we used treatment group as whole-plot factor, time



as the first subplot factor, and eye as the second to account for two eye measurements per patient at each time point. We excluded three-year follow up because of potential bias resulting from missing data. The main question was whether the time profiles of the two groups were parallel or diverging, i.e., if there exists a statistical interaction between treatment group and time after 2 year follow up, which would indicate an effect of EGCG on OCT changes over time. The effect size is represented by the relative marginal treatment effect (RTE), indicating whether data tend to be smaller/larger under respective factor level combinations. The analysis set included missing values as described in the flow chart (Figure 1). In this data set we rounded follow-up time to full years in order to use time as a categorical variable. To confirm our findings, changes in OCT parameters were estimated with linear mixed models (LMM)

using the formula: $OCT\ value \sim group * time\ from\ baseline + (1 + time\ from\ baseline | patient/eye)$. In LMM, all sessions were considered including time since baseline as a continuous variable. No corrections for multiple comparisons were performed for this exploratory outcome analysis. Statistical analyses were performed with R (57) version 3.6.2 with packages nparLD (56), lme4, lmerTest, tidyverse, tableone, ggplot2, beeswarm, ggplot, RMisc. Statistical significance was established at $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

Cohort Description

Sixty-one patients with progressive MS were randomized in the SUPREMES trial to receive either EGCG treatment or placebo. From these patients, we had to exclude 16 patients because of

TABLE 3 | Longitudinal OCT changes in treatment arms—nonparametric analysis.

	EGCG		Placebo		EGCG vs. Placebo <i>p</i>
	Mean change [CI]/ μm	RTE treatment:time	Mean change [CI]/ μm	RTE treatment:time	
pRNFL/ μm	−0.83 [1.29]	0.331	−0.64 [1.56]	0.492	0.156
GCIP/ μm	−0.67 [0.67]	0.360	−0.14 [0.47]	0.429	0.476
INL/ μm	−0.06 [0.58]	0.504	0.22 [0.41]	0.635	0.455

All results for the 2-year follow-up visit. Test statistics from “nonparametric analysis of longitudinal data.” EGCG, epigallocatechin-gallate; RTE, Relative treatment effect; pRNFL, peripapillary retinal nerve fiber layer; GCIP, ganglion cell and inner plexiform layer; INL, inner nuclear layer.

TABLE 4 | Longitudinal OCT changes in treatment arms—linear mixed models.

		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Lower CI	Upper CI	<i>R</i> ² _m	<i>R</i> ² _c
pRNFL	Treatment EGCG	3.194	4.014	0.433	−4.673	11.062	0.032	0.982
	Time	−0.788	0.306	0.018	−1.387	−0.189		
	Treatment EGCG:Time	0.766	0.463	0.111	−0.140	1.673		
GCIP	Treatment EGCG	4.389	2.432	0.082	−0.379	9.156	0.092	0.994
	Time	−0.221	0.111	0.068	−0.439	0.003		
	Treatment EGCG:Time	0.0138	0.160	0.933	−0.300	0.327		
INL	Treatment EGCG	1.866	0.838	0.034	0.223	3.509	0.136	0.956
	Time	−0.075	0.084	0.374	−0.240	0.089		
	Treatment EGCG:Time	0.064	0.119	0.589	−0.168	0.297		

All result for the maximum available follow-up time (continuous) under treatment. Test statistics from linear mixed models. *B*, non-standardized correlation coefficient; *SE*, standard error; *CI*, 95% confidence interval; *R*²_m, Marginal *R*²; *R*²_c, Conditional *R*²; pRNFL, peripapillary retinal nerve fiber layer; GCIP, ganglion cell and inner plexiform layer; INL, inner nuclear layer.

missing OCT data. From the 45 patients with OCT data, seven patients had no follow-up OCT data, and 7 patients had to be excluded due to ophthalmological diseases such as glaucoma, recurrent iritis, and myopia <−5 dpt. Thus, 31 patients were included in analysis. The inclusion process is detailed in **Figure 1**. Moreover, from 2 patients (1 EGCG, 1 placebo), one eye was excluded from all analyses because of unilateral retinopathy. Two pRNFL scans from 2 patients (both EGCG) and 34 macular scans from 28 sessions of 20 patients (8 EGCG, 12 placebo) failed the OSCAR-IB quality criteria and had to be excluded (53, 54).

Baseline OCT Findings

Baseline cohort details are described in **Table 1**. Patients had their first OCT examination median 1.05 (interquartile range 0.00–1.52) years after randomization. The OCT cohort comprised 15 patients from the treatment and 16 patients from the placebo group. There were no significant differences in age, sex, time since disease onset, EDSS, time in the trial, and follow-up duration between treatment and placebo groups (**Table 1**). Patients in the EGCG treated arm had thicker GCIP, INL, and—though not significant—pRNFL (**Table 2**).

Longitudinal OCT Results

Figure 2 illustrates changes over time in the EGCG treated and Placebo group. **Table 3** depicts changes over time separately for the treatment and the placebo arms and their statistical comparison from non-parametric longitudinal data analysis. There was no significant interaction of treatment and time for

any parameter. **Table 4** includes results from LMMs, as well not detecting any significant differences in change over time between EGCG and placebo group.

DISCUSSION

In this study, we performed an analysis of OCT data as secondary (pRNFL) and exploratory (GCIP, INL) outcomes in the SUPREMES trial. Specifically, we investigated differences in retinal thickness changes over time between patients treated with EGCG vs. placebo. We found no difference between the treatment groups.

These results support the findings in the analysis of the primary and secondary outcome parameters of the SUPREMES trial: no evidence for treatment was found on brain atrophy, lesion load, and clinical scores (49). The primary outcome parameter of the SUPREMES trial was brain atrophy, a commonly used outcome for neuroprotective trials in MS (58). While brain atrophy measurement is widely established, retinal thickness analysis has been included as an additional outcome as the use of brain atrophy is not without challenge: a reduction of acute swelling by a potent anti-inflammatory intervention may lead to the phenomenon of “pseudoatrophy,” which is referred to as decreased brain volume due to the resolution of edema and inflammation after treatment (59, 60). Furthermore, as our cohort had an average age of 50 years, treatment effects on brain atrophy may be confounded by non-linear aging effects (61).

In contrast, retinal thickness measurements are less prone to aging (52). Furthermore, GCIP is not prone to swelling (62), whereas a subtle swelling of pRNFL outside of acute ON has not been reported so far. While they may be inferior to brain atrophy at face value, GCIP and pRNFL may be superior for detecting neuroprotective effects due to a lack of pseudoatrophy. Nevertheless, we did not find a significantly reduced atrophy of pRNFL and GCIP in the EGCG group.

While pRNFL and GCIP thinning reflect neuroaxonal damage, the INL is considered a marker of inflammation. Treatment response is considered to be associated with INL thinning (46). However, the INL is also subject to atrophy as indicated by thinning in a large progressive MS study (47). In our study, the INL showed no overall thickness changes. This suggests that either no time-dependent change occurs, or that both atrophy and inflammation occur in our cohort, masking a treatment-associated thinning.

Other clinical trials also failed to show a treatment effect of EGCG: The SUNIMS trial (63) reported no treatment effect of EGCG on clinical or MRI measures in RRMS patients. Moreover, a recently published study demonstrated no impact of EGCG after 48 weeks of treatment on disease progression in multiple system atrophy (64). A potential reason for the failure of EGCG in clinical trials could be the lower bioavailability of oral EGCG than previously assumed (65, 66).

Several limitations may impact our results. First, the low sample size of our cohort. A previous study estimated that the sample size for a progressive MS trial on neuroprotective agents should be at least $n = 173$ for pRNFL and $n = 125$ for GCIP per trial arm for a 3-year study (power 80%, effect size 50%), numbers way larger than achieved in this exploratory outcome analysis (47).

Another weakness is that treatment and placebo groups were not well-matched regarding baseline OCT, with a significantly thicker GCIP and INL in the treatment group. In our non-parametric analysis, we used the change of retinal parameters as outcome and the linear mixed models we computed additionally consider the individual intercept at baseline. Thus, we assume that the differences at OCT baseline had no influence on the longitudinal analysis.

To date, there are few studies applying OCT as an outcome parameter in clinical trials of MS. To the best of our knowledge, there is no published prospective interventional study that applied OCT as outcome parameter in trials in the progressive forms of the disease. While OCT detected differences in retinal thickness change between different treatment groups in RRMS (45), it is possible that the retina of SPMS and PPMS patients are less responsive to treatment. Another aspect is the high frequency of primary eye disorders in a usually elder progressive MS population. In our study, almost 20% of patients needed to be excluded due to eye comorbidities. Furthermore, due to increased disability, progressive MS patients are often less compliant with the OCT examination, leading to a high number of noise or cut-off scans failing the quality control. While this does not preclude OCT as endpoint from clinical trials in progressive MS, it suggests that careful ophthalmological

examination for comorbidities and rigorous quality control of OCT scans are of paramount importance. A recent retrospective study showed a decreased macular RNFL thinning associated with 4-aminopyridine treatment in a mixed cohort of RRMS and progressive MS patients (67). These and our results encourage the further evaluation of OCT measurements as outcome parameters in clinical trials of progressive MS.

To conclude, our study shows no effect over time of EGCG on pRNFL, GCIP, or INL. As such, our study does not provide sufficient evidence for a neuroprotective effect of EGCG on retinal thickness in patients with SPMS and PPMS. While this is in line with the outcomes of the main SUPREMES trial, our study was probably underpowered to detect a treatment effect.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available upon request to the corresponding author to any qualified researcher.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by The SUPREMES trial was approved by the local ethics committee (LaGeSo ZS EK 10 407/08, new: 08/0407-EK 15) and by the German Federal Institute for Drugs and Medical Devices (BfArM). The trial is registered with EudraCT (2008-005213-22) and clinicaltrials.gov (NCT00799890). The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study. Written informed consent was obtained from the individual(s) for the publication of any potentially identifiable images or data included in this article.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

KK drafting/revising the manuscript, analyzed and interpreted the data, and acquisition of data. RR acquisition of data, interpreted the data, and revised the manuscript for intellectual content. JD, FP, and JB-S study concept, acquisition of data, and revised the manuscript for intellectual content. FK analyzed and interpreted the data, statistical analysis, and revised the manuscript for intellectual content. AB study concept, analyzed and interpreted the data, statistical analysis, and drafting/revising the manuscript. HZ study concept, acquisition of data, analyzed and interpreted the data, statistical analysis, and drafting/revised the manuscript for intellectual content. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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- The remaining authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.
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11	Nature Human Behaviour	2,457	12.282	0.014190
12	BIOLOGICAL PSYCHIATRY	44,016	12.095	0.053910
13	BRAIN	53,282	11.337	0.067050
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15	Molecular Neurodegeneration	4,933	9.599	0.011840
16	PROGRESS IN NEUROBIOLOGY	12,791	9.371	0.011250
17	FRONTIERS IN NEUROENDOCRINOLOGY	4,491	9.059	0.007050
18	ANNALS OF NEUROLOGY	37,304	9.037	0.044120
19	NEUROSCIENCE AND BIOBEHAVIORAL REVIEWS	28,873	8.330	0.051900
20	Neurology-Neuroimmunology & Neuroinflammation	2,232	7.724	0.008400
21	NEUROPATHOLOGY AND APPLIED NEUROBIOLOGY	3,992	7.500	0.005960

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Epigallocatechin Gallate in Relapsing-Remitting Multiple Sclerosis

A Randomized, Placebo-Controlled Trial

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Abstract

Objective

To assess the safety and efficacy of epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGCG) add-on to glatiramer acetate (GA) in patients with relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis (RRMS).

Methods

We enrolled patients with RRMS (aged 18–60 years, Expanded Disability Status Scale [EDSS] score 0–6.5), receiving stable GA treatment in a multicenter, prospective, double-blind, phase II, randomized controlled trial. Participants received up to 800 mg oral EGCG daily over a period of 18 months. The primary outcome was the proportion of patients without new hyperintense lesions on T2-weighted (T2w) brain MRI within 18 months. Secondary end points included additional MRI and clinical parameters. Immunologic effects of EGCG were investigated in exploratory experiments.

Results

A total of 122 patients on GA were randomly assigned to EGCG treatment (n = 62) or placebo (n = 60). We could not demonstrate a difference between groups after 18 months for the primary outcome or other radiologic (T2w lesion volume, T1w hypointense lesion number or volume, number of cumulative contrast-enhancing lesions, percent brain volume change), or clinical (EDSS, MS functional composite, and annualized relapse rate) parameter. EGCG treatment did not affect immune response to GA. Pharmacologic analysis revealed wide ranging EGCG plasma levels. The treatment was well tolerated with a similar incidence of mostly mild adverse events similar in both groups.

Conclusion

In RRMS, oral EGCG add-on to GA was not superior to placebo in influencing MRI and clinical disease activity over 18 months. The treatment was safe at a daily dosage up to 800 mg EGCG. It did not influence immune parameters, despite indication of EGCG being bioavailable in patients.

*These authors contributed equally to this work as co-first authors.

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Glossary

AE = adverse event; CEL = contrast-enhancing lesion; EAE = experimental autoimmune encephalomyelitis; ECGG = epigallocatechin-3-gallate; EDSS = Expanded Disability Status Scale; GA = glatiramer acetate; ITT = intention to treat; MSFC = MS Functional Composite; NK = natural killer; PASAT = Paced Auditory Serial Addition Test; PBMC = peripheral blood mononuclear cell; PBVC = percent brain volume change; PP = per protocol; RRMS = relapsing-remitting MS; SAE = serious adverse event.

Classification of Evidence

This study provides Class II evidence that for patients with RRMS, EGCG added to GA did not significantly affect the development of new hyperintense lesions on T2-weighted brain MRI.

Trial Registration Information

Clinical trial registration number: NCT00525668.

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is characterized by autoimmune inflammatory and neurodegenerative pathology of the CNS causing pronounced neurologic disability in younger adults.^{1,2} In recent years, several immunomodulatory drugs for the treatment of relapsing-remitting MS (RRMS) have been approved targeting mainly the inflammatory processes of this disease.^{3,4}

However, the development of drugs that are capable of halting or decelerating the neurodegenerative aspects, which are prevalent from the earliest disease stages, is an unmet clinical need.⁵

Consumption of green tea is considered to have a preventive impact on various inflammatory and neurodegenerative as well as other diseases.^{6,7} The most relevant compound in this regard is the polyphenol epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), comprising 50–80% of the total catechins in green tea.⁸

In experimental autoimmune encephalomyelitis (EAE)—an animal model mimicking aspects of MS—EGCG exerts anti-inflammatory properties via downregulation of NF- κ B in T cells and has neuroprotective capacities by blocking the formation of neurotoxic reactive oxygen species in neurons.⁹ In this model, oral EGCG significantly reduced clinical disease severity as well as CNS inflammation and neuroaxonal damage, both as preventive and therapeutic treatment.^{9,10} Moreover, in EAE, concomitant application of EGCG and glatiramer acetate (GA) revealed synergistic effects *in vitro* and *in vivo*.¹¹

Against this background, we investigated the effect of oral EGCG given as add-on to GA therapy over a period of 18 months on radiologic and clinical disease activity as well as safety and tolerability in patients with RRMS.

Methods

Primary Research Question

We performed a prospective, double-blind, parallel-group, randomized controlled trial in patients with RRMS, at 9 sites in Germany (including general hospitals and academic medical

centers) recruiting from August 2007 to May 2011 to evaluate the question whether oral application of up to 800 mg EGCG reduces the development of new hyperintense lesions on T2-weighted (T2w) brain MRI in patients with RRMS on stable treatment with GA 20 mg. This study provides Class II evidence because less than 80% of randomized patients completed the trial.

Study Design and Participants

For details on the study conduct, refer to the study protocol in the online supplement. Eligibility criteria comprised fulfillment of the 2005 McDonald criteria for RRMS,¹² age between 18 and 60 years, an Expanded Disability Status Scale (EDSS)¹³ score of 0–6.5, and a stable treatment with GA 20 mg daily subcutaneously for at least 6 months. A relapse-free period of at least 30 days before randomization was mandatory. Key exclusion criteria were any progressive forms of MS, major systemic disease, clinically relevant predefined laboratory abnormalities, and intake of any potentially hepatotoxic medication as well as cytochrome P450 3A4-inhibiting or -inducing drugs. Additional consumption of green tea or GTE was prohibited.

Because of lacking human data, sample size calculation was based on articles by Aktas et al.⁹ and Zhao et al.¹⁴ Proportions of 45% for EGCG and 16% for placebo were assumed for the primary end point (patients without new T2w lesions after 18 months), leading to 92 patients in total (2-sided type I error = 5%, power = 80%). Because of uncertainty in the preconditions of the sample size calculation, an internal pilot study¹⁵ was integrated into the study. This design allows for a (blinded) recalculation of sample size without affecting the type I error.¹⁶ The planned recalculation after the inclusion of 50 participants resulted in a sample size of 126 patients in total, assuming a prior difference of 0.20 between proportions. This sample size was confirmed by a second internal blinded recalculation after inclusion of 80 individuals.

Standard Protocol Approvals, Registrations, and Patient Consents

The study was approved by the local ethics committees and by the German Federal Institute for Drugs and Medical Devices

(BfArM). This trial is registered with EudraCT (Nr. 2006-006323-39) and clinicaltrials.gov (NCT00525668). It was conducted strictly following the study protocol, the applicable German laws (Arzneimittelgesetz, 14. Novelle 2005), the Harmonized Tripartite Guideline for Good Clinical Practice (ICH-GCP), and the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki in its applicable version. Every participant provided written informed consent before enrollment.

Data Availability Statement

As far as permitted according to data protection requirements and consent provided by the participants, original data are available from the corresponding author on request from any qualified investigator within 5 years after publication.

Randomization and Masking

Patients were randomly (1:1) assigned to receive as add-on to GA after a dosing phase of 4 months per day either 800 mg capsules of Sunphenon® (GTE containing >90% EGCG, product of Taiyo International, taiyointernational.com) or capsules of placebo, which had identical appearance.

To account for potential baseline imbalances, patients were stratified before randomization for sex (female/male) and T2w lesion number at screening (≤ 15 or > 15 T2w lesions). A separate block randomization list was generated by the independent pharmacy, which distributed the screened study participants to the treatment groups.

Patients and all staff remained masked for treatment allocation during the entire study. To minimize the risk of biased clinical examinations by patients reporting adverse events (AE), an independent examining physician restricted to performing the neurologic examination rated EDSS only.

Procedures

Standardized neurologic assessments including the EDSS¹³ and Multiple Sclerosis Functional Composite (MSFC)¹⁷ with its subtests 9-Hole Peg Test, Timed 25-Foot Walk Test, and Paced Auditory Serial Addition Test (PASAT) were performed by an especially trained and neurostatus-certified examiner at screening (which was at most 1 week before randomization), then every 3 months until the end of the study at month 18, and at every unscheduled visit when a relapse was suspected. A relapse was defined as any new or reoccurring neurologic symptoms in the absence of fever or infections, lasting for at least 24 hours, separated by at least 30 days from the onset of a previous relapse, and confirmed by the independent EDSS rater. For safety monitoring, regular medical examinations and laboratory examinations (blood count, liver enzymes, electrolytes, creatinine, C-reactive protein, blood glucose, and coagulation) were scheduled every 3 months and in short-term follow-up in case of pathologic results.

MRI was performed at screening and thereafter every 3 months until the end of the study at month 18. For all study

sites, MRI measurements were performed at a single central facility (leading study site Charité) ensuring identical and constant acquisition conditions on a 1.5 T MRI (Siemens Sonata, Siemens Medical Systems, Erlangen, Germany).

To investigate potential immunologic effects of EGCG treatment, we analyzed the frequencies and activation status of T cells (CD4⁺ and CD8⁺), B cells, monocytes, and natural killer (NK) cells by flow cytometry analysis using EDTA whole blood samples from a randomly selected subgroup of 35 study participants (20 EGCG and 15 placebo). Furthermore, to assess the specific proliferative response to GA, peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) were isolated from patients' whole blood (n = 40 EGCG group; n = 39 placebo group including the 35 patients of the immunologic substudy).

To measure EGCG plasma levels, biosamples were acquired at a time point after overnight fasting and before intake of the first dose of study medication (200 mg EGCG or placebo capsule) as well as 2 hours later after a standardized breakfast. Plasma concentrations of EGCG were determined as previously described.¹⁸

Outcomes

The primary outcome was the proportion of patients without new hyperintense T2w MRI lesions within 18 months. Secondary MRI outcomes were number and volume of T2w hyperintense lesions, number and volume of T1w hypointense lesions (black holes), number of cumulative contrast-enhancing lesions (CELs), and brain atrophy quantified by percent brain volume change (PBVC). Secondary clinical outcome measurements were disability progression measured by EDSS and MSFC as well as annualized relapse rate. Immunologic effects of EGCG were assessed in exploratory experiments.

Statistical Analysis

An intention-to-treat (ITT) approach was planned as the primary analysis. In addition, a per-protocol (PP) analysis was performed, omitting patients with major protocol violations, i.e., who stopped treatment due to adverse reaction or who disregarded study procedures, defined as missing more than 2 scheduled study visits or intake of less than 90% of the study medication.

Results are expressed as arithmetic mean \pm SD, median (range), or frequencies (%). The primary end point was assessed using the Fisher exact test. Secondary end points were tested for differences between groups by using the nonparametric (exact) Mann-Whitney test for independent groups. Differences in categorical variables were tested by the Fisher exact test.

Differences between the EGCG and placebo groups for the entire time course were assessed using nonparametric multivariate variance and covariance analyses of all longitudinal

data in a two-factorial design.¹⁹ A *p* value <0.05 was considered statistically significant. All tests of secondary end points were conducted as exploratory data analysis. Therefore, no adjustments for multiple testing were made. Numerical calculations were performed with IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, version 21 (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY), StatXact 6 (CYTEL Software Corp., Cambridge, MA), and SAS, version 9.2 (SAS Institute, Inc., Cary, NC).

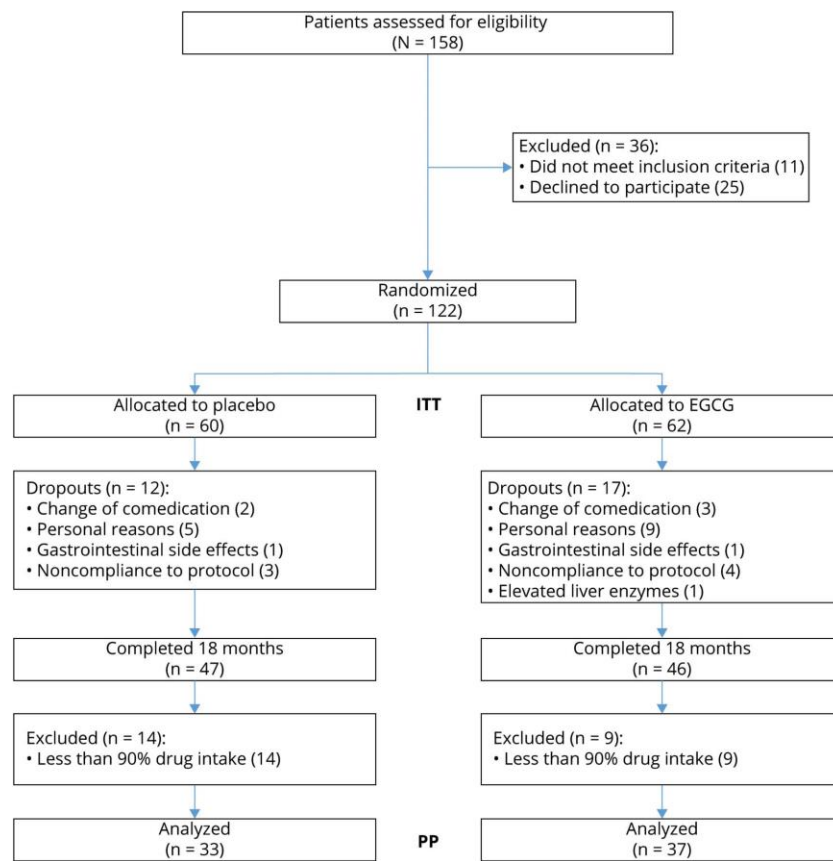
Results

One hundred fifty-eight patients were screened for eligibility, 122 of whom were enrolled in the study (figure 1). Participants were randomly assigned to receive EGCG (*n* = 62) or placebo (*n* = 60) as add-on to immunomodulatory therapy with GA. All included patients were of Caucasian ethnicity.

The 2 groups did not differ regarding baseline variables (table 1).

Ultimately, 17 patients in the EGCG group and 12 patients in the placebo group did not complete the study (figure 1). This was mainly due to personal reasons (such as relocation or the desire to become pregnant), change from GA to other disease-modifying therapy, or noncompliance of study rules (e.g., missing more than 2 visits or breaking the blinding by having the study medication analyzed by a third party). One patient in each group discontinued due to stomach and digestion complaints. In the EGCG group, 1 participant had to stop study medication because of elevated liver enzymes higher than threefold the upper limit of normal; elevated values normalized thereafter. Of the patients completing the full 18 months of study medication, 33 patients (68.8%) on placebo and 37 patients (82.2%) on EGCG had a compliance

Figure 1 Trial Flowchart



ITT = intention to treat; PP = per protocol.

Table 1 Baseline Characteristics of the Study Population

Characteristics	GA + EGCG (n = 62)	GA + placebo (n = 60)	p Value
Age (y)	39 (9.4) ¹	42 (8.0) ^c	0.060 ^e
Women	41 (67%)	40 (69%)	1.000 ^f
Relapse in past 12 months	32 (52%)	36 (60%)	0.368 ^f
EDSS	2.0 (0–6.0) ^d	2.0 (0–6.0) ^d	0.733 ^e
Time since first MS symptoms (y)	9.8 (7.0) ^c	8.9 (6.4) ^c	0.544 ^e
Time since MS diagnosis (y)	6.1 (4.7) ^c	5.4 (4.4) ^c	0.387 ^e
Duration of treatment with GA (y)	3.1 (2.9) ^c	2.6 (2.5) ^c	0.190 ^e
Multiple Sclerosis Functional Composite (z-score) ^a	0.083 (0.684) ^c	0.147 (0.675) ^c	0.594 ^e
Paced Auditory Serial Addition Test ^a	46.8 (12.4) ^c	49.4 (10.7) ^c	0.223 ^e
Timed 25-Foot Walk Test average speed (s)	5.1 (1.8) ^c	4.9 (1.9) ^c	0.307 ^e
9-Hole Peg Test average speed (s)	20.7 (4.3) ^c	21.5 (5.6) ^c	0.884 ^e
T2w lesion volume (mm ³) ^b	5,239 (8,904) ^c	4,401 (6,034) ^c	0.792 ^e
T2w lesion count ^b	36 (33) ^c	38 (28) ^c	0.443 ^e
T1w hypointense lesion volume (mm ³) ^b	1,758 (2,557) ^c	2,240 (4,171) ^c	0.331 ^e
T1w hypointense lesion count ^b	7 (6) ^c	8 (6) ^c	0.941 ^e

Abbreviations: EGCG = epigallocatechin-3-gallate; EDSS = Expanded Disability Status Scale; GA = glatiramer acetate.

Data are ¹mean (SD), number (%), or ²median (range). ^e(exact) Mann-Whitney test, ^fFisher exact test.

^a Data available for 61 patients in the EGCG group and 59 patients in the placebo group.

^b Data available for 54 patients in the EGCG group and 52 in the placebo group.

of at least 90% regarding intake of study medication (number of taken capsules as assessed by the drug count at study visits).

The results of the ITT analyses for the MRI outcome parameters are summarized in table 2. Regarding the primary end point, we observed no significant difference in the proportion of patients without new T2w hyperintense lesions between EGCG- and placebo-treated patients at month 18. Regarding secondary outcomes, the number of T2w lesions as well as the number of T1w hypointense lesions (table 2) increased irrespective of EGCG or placebo group during the study period as did the volume of T2w hyperintense and T1w hypointense lesions (figure 2 and table 2). Neither parameter revealed significant differences between the study groups (table 2).

Longitudinal analysis of the entire time course¹⁹ including all available time points (0, 6, 12, 15, and 18 months) adjusted for values at baseline also did not show a significant difference in MRI parameters between the EGCG and placebo groups (data not shown). Both groups developed a similar number of CELs during the study.

Furthermore, we could not detect a difference between the 2 study groups in PBVC, a measure of whole-brain atrophy, over the 18-month period of the trial (table 2).

With regard to clinical end points (table 3), no differences were observed in EDSS or MSFC between the EGCG and placebo groups, neither in regard to change from baseline to month 18 nor in longitudinal EDSS analysis of the entire study course adjusted for values at baseline.

The results of the PP analyses (n = 70) concerning primary as well as all secondary outcome parameters did not differ in their statistical significance from those of the ITT analyses (data not shown).

The analysis of subgroups enables a differentiated view. In the group of participants who did not suffer a relapse 12 months before study inclusion, the rate of patients who did not develop new T2w lesions was higher in the group with the active ingredient (EGCG 12/21, placebo 5/19, p = 0.062). This was also the case in the group of participants with 15 and lower T2w lesions at baseline (EGCG 10/13, placebo 3/9, p = 0.079) and surprisingly in the subgroup of patients who developed T2w lesion volume increase during the study (EGCG 10/38, placebo 3/35, p = 0.067). No statistically significant difference in the rate of newly developed T2w lesions could be demonstrated in the subgroup with EDSS 3 and lower (EGCG 13/36, placebo 11/39, p = 0.621) and in the subgroup of patients with Gd-positive lesions in the course of the study (EGCG 3/19, placebo 3/11, p = 0.641).

Table 2 MRI Outcome Parameters

	GA + EGCG (n = 62)	GA + placebo (n = 60)	p Value
Proportion of patients without new T2w lesions	18 (29%)	15 (25%)	0.686 ^f
Number of new T2w lesions ^a	3.1 (6.2)	1.9 (5.1)	0.607 ^e
Volume of new T2w lesions (mm ³) ^a	749 (3,639)	271 (1,592)	0.499 ^e
Number of new T1w hypointense lesions ^b	0.40 (0.8)	0.5 (1.2)	0.964 ^e
Volume of new T1w hypointense lesions (mm ³) ^b	118 (473)	59 (610)	0.984 ^e
Number of CELs ^c	0.55 (1.04)	0.38 (1.4)	0.939 ^e
PBVC ^d	-0.6831 (0.7565)	-0.5945 (0.7675)	0.386 ^e

Abbreviations: GA = glatiramer acetate; CEL = contrast-enhancing lesion; EGCG = epigallocatechin-3-gallate; PBVC = percent brain volume change.

Data are mean (SD), number (%). ^e(exact) Mann-Whitney test, ^fFisher exact test.

^aData available for 53 patients in the EGCG group and 51 in the placebo group.

^bData available for 50 patients in the EGCG group and 51 in the placebo group.

^cData available for 42 patients in the EGCG group and 45 in the placebo group.

^dData available for 42 patients in the EGCG group and 42 in the placebo group.

The analysis of the frequencies of the main immune cell populations (numbers of circulating T cells, B cells, monocytes, or NK cells) in a subgroup of 20 EGCG-treated and 15 placebo-treated patients revealed that the treatment with EGCG did not alter the overall immune status of the patients (data not shown). The in vitro examination of the T-cell response to different concentrations of GA using PBMC from 40 EGCG and 39 placebo-treated patients indicated that treatment with EGCG did not interfere with the overall T-cell response of the patients to GA. Though, EGCG treatment had a tendency to diminish the in vitro response to high GA concentrations at 2 mg/mL ($p = 0.099$, data not shown). This concentration is far higher than the serum level in humans under regular treatment with GA.

Of the 60 participants in the placebo group, 58 (97%) experienced 1 or more AEs, with 8 (13%) having a serious adverse event (SAE). In the EGCG group, 60 of the 62 participants (97%) had at least 1 AE, 6 (10%) of which were considered serious (see table e-1, links.lww.com/NXI/A458). None of the SAEs were considered related to the study drug. All occurred due to hospitalization of study participants for various reasons. The incidence of SAE and AE was similar in both study groups. The most common AEs were infections of the upper respiratory, gastrointestinal, and urinary tracts. One placebo-treated and 1 EGCG-treated patient stopped intake of study medication because of gastrointestinal complaints. As 1 patient of the EGCG group had to be withdrawn due to elevated liver enzymes, we performed a comparison of liver enzyme levels between our study groups. This revealed no significant differences (data not shown). In plasma from patients on placebo, EGCG was not detectable at any time point.

In 41 patients on EGCG, 2 hours after ingestion of a standardized breakfast and the morning dose of 200 mg Sunphenon, EGCG plasma levels ranging from 20.21 to 331.66 ng/mL were measured. If the data set is divided into 2 groups

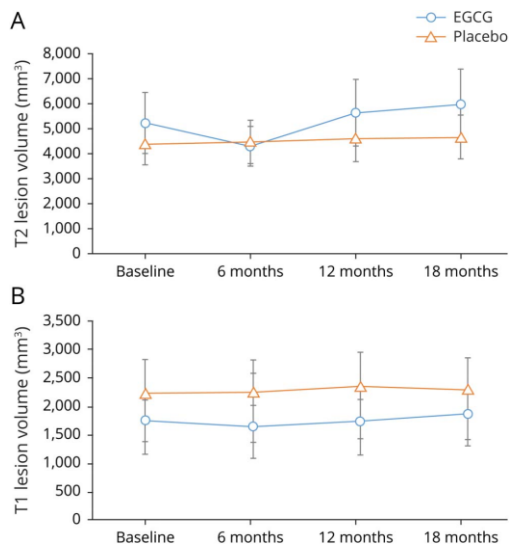
at the median of the EGCG level, the number of new T2w lesions is less in the group with higher EGCG levels compared with the group below the median. But the numbers are too small for statistical significance.

Discussion

Our randomized, placebo-controlled multicenter study failed to show an effect of oral EGCG on MRI or clinical disease markers in patients with RRMS on stable immunomodulatory treatment with GA.

In line with other polyphenols, experimental data had previously demonstrated that orally administered EGCG reduced disease severity when given at initiation or after the onset of experimental neuroinflammation and exerted both anti-inflammatory and neuroprotective effects, also in combination with GA.^{9,11} Among the potential mechanisms of action of EGCG are antioxidant properties and an impact on several signal transduction pathways, including growth factor-mediated pathways, the mitogen-activated protein kinase-dependent, and ubiquitin/proteasome degradation pathways. These data in conjunction with EGCG's presumed mode of action together with the finding that the conventional form of MS typical for Western countries is much less prevalent in Asian countries with high green tea consumption like Japan²⁰ encouraged us to conduct this randomized placebo-controlled add-on trial.

Only a few clinical studies with patients with cancer administering high-dose EGCG or GTE had been reported before planning of our trial.^{21,22} For the selection of the maximum daily dose of EGCG, we had to rely on pharmacokinetic and tolerability studies in healthy subjects with short-time intakes only (maximum weeks) of doses from 800 to 1,000 mg EGCG/GTE per day.²³⁻²⁵ Plasma elimination half-life of

Figure 2 T2w and T1w Hypointense Lesion Volumes

Mean change over time of volume (A) T2w lesion load (B) T1w hypointense lesion. EGCG = epigallocatechin-3-gallate.

EGCG was reported to be as long as 5.2 hours, and levels were detectable after repeated administration of 800 mg EGCG once daily over 10 days.²⁵ We therefore concluded that 400 mg EGCG twice daily would be sufficient to yield measurable plasma levels even after overnight fasting. However, we have learned from our data that plasma levels of EGCG are extremely variable between individuals even under standardized conditions. Although a dosage of 600 mg EGCG daily improved muscle metabolism in patients with MS,²⁶ oral ingestion of 400 mg EGCG twice daily may not have been sufficient to exert biological effects in the CNS in all patients due to insufficient plasma levels. This may be 1 potential explanation for the negative outcome of this study. Recently, the bioavailability of orally administered EGCG was called into question,²⁷ which is however in contradiction to an earlier pharmacokinetic study reporting a high absorption rate of oral EGCG in the fasting state.²⁵

Another putative cause for not meeting the efficacy end points could lie in the add-on study design. A placebo-controlled EGCG-only trial would have been considered unethical and would not be approved by the competent authorities. Thus, we had to choose an add-on approach to an approved immunomodulatory drug. For reasons of safety, we selected GA because we considered this compound to be the least problematic in terms of potential unfavorable drug interactions, in particular as hepatotoxicity had been discussed as a rare but potentially severe side effect of green tea dietary supplements.²⁸ Fortunately, we did not face SAEs with our EGCG dosing regimen and GA combination therapy. This is in

contrast to a small study with Polyphenon E (a GTE compound) in MS that was prematurely terminated due to significant hepatotoxicity.²⁹ In our study, only 1 subject dropped out due to elevated liver enzymes. Maybe EGCG as a pure substance afflicts metabolic processes of the liver less than GTE, containing several types of polyphenols and sometimes small amounts of caffeine in addition.

Furthermore, in the study with Polyphenon E, add-on therapy with interferon beta was permitted. Hepatotoxicity of this drug is known and may account partially for the elevation of liver enzymes reported in this study. Our trial was also safe regarding other organ-specific side effects and participants reported good overall tolerability of EGCG.

Immunologic analyses revealed no impact of EGCG on T-cell responses to GA except when applying very high doses of GA, suggesting that the study medication did not counteract the beneficial effects of GA.

In our study cohort, all patients were under stable GA treatment before administering EGCG, and only about half of the participants had suffered from a relapse during 12 months before study inclusion. This is in strong contrast to recent studies on disease-modifying drugs in MS,^{30,31} which report a mean of 1.4 relapses in the previous 12 months, and demonstrates the notable stability of our study population. It is composed of many patients with a more benign course of MS who had a median EDSS of 2.0 at study entry after 8–9 years of disease, making it even more difficult to observe a therapeutic effect in such patients.

As both study groups (GA + EGCG and GA + placebo) also hardly suffered from disease activity during the trial, the absence of disease dynamics made it impossible to detect an effect of the intervention.

Overestimation of the treatment effect calculating the sample size might also account for the difficulties in demonstrating mild additive or synergistic effects of EGCG.

With the given data, the power is only 7% in the ITT population to detect the difference of percentages of patients without new T2w lesions between verum and placebo at the end of the study. This figure is very revealing: the small difference of percentages of patients without new T2w lesions between treatment groups in our cohort (31.9% vs 39.1%) can only be detected with 719 patients per group, assuming a power of 80% and a type I error (α) of 5% (two-sided).

These numbers seem very high for a clinical trial, but they are in the order of size of the phase III studies of the substances teriflunomide (TEMSO $n = 1,088$, TOWER $n = 1,169$)^{30,32} and dimethyl fumarate (DEFINE $n = 1,237$, CONFIRM $n = 1,430$),^{30,33} which are now approved for the treatment of MS. The power considerations keep open the possibility of exploring, with an appropriate study design, whether the disease course of MS (at least in terms of T2 lesion load) can

Table 3 Clinical Outcome Parameters

	GA + EGCG (n = 62)	GA + placebo (n = 60)	p Value
EDSS			
Month 18	2.2 (1.3)	2.40 (1.4)	0.727 ^b
Change from baseline	0.14 (0.62)	-0.01 (0.74)	0.312 ^b
Multiple Sclerosis Functional Composite (z-score)^a			
Month 18	0.34 (0.72)	0.40 (0.56)	0.931 ^b
Change from baseline	-0.25 (0.42)	-0.26 (0.32)	0.772 ^b
Paced Auditory Serial Addition Test (z-score)^a			
Month 18	0.42 (0.85)	0.53 (0.64)	0.536 ^b
Change from baseline	0.46 (0.73)	0.38 (0.59)	0.705 ^b
9-Hole Peg Test (z-score)			
Month 18	0.55 (0.95)	0.47 (1.01)	0.409 ^b
Change from baseline	0.39 (0.55)	0.45 (0.53)	0.701 ^b
Timed 25-Foot Walk Test (z-score)			
Month 18	0.01 (0.95)	0.20 (0.51)	0.337 ^b
Change from baseline	-0.16 (0.42)	0.01 (0.57)	0.210 ^b
ARR			
Month 18	0.47 (0.73)	0.50 (0.76)	0.954 ^b

Abbreviations: ARR = annualized relapse rate; EGCG = epigallocatechin-3-gallate; EDSS = Expanded Disability Status Scale; GA = glatiramer acetate. Data are mean (SD). ^b(exact) Mann-Whitney test.

^a Data available for 61 patients in the EGCG group and 59 patients in the placebo group.

be influenced by EGCG. Although the subgroup analyses only showed a statistical trend because of the small number of cases in the subgroups, it could be speculated with caution that patients with MS without relapse activity and a low cerebral lesion load could benefit from EGCG treatment.

Despite experimental evidence of anti-inflammatory and neuroprotective properties of EGCG,⁹ in the human setting, its neuroprotective capacities may outweigh. There is growing evidence from several case-controlled and cohort studies in North America, Europe, and Asia that consumption of tea lowers the risk of neurodegenerative disease like Alzheimer and Parkinson disease.³⁴ However, a recently published phase III controlled clinical trial in multiple system atrophy could not reveal an association with clinically relevant disease modification compared with placebo,³⁵ despite—also in this case—promising basic science and animal experimental data.³⁶ Also the evaluation of PBVC—a marker for brain atrophy—in our study could not prove an effect of EGCG on neurodegeneration within 18 months. Even with a significant extension of the study period to 36 months, no relevant effect of EGCG on the atrophy rate could be demonstrated in progressive MS.³⁷

Recent studies reported beneficial effects of orally applied EGCG on cognitive functions in combination with cognitive training in patients with Down syndrome and fragile X

syndrome.^{38,39} In our study, we assessed for the screening of cognitive function the PASAT testing calculation ability, auditory information processing speed, and flexibility. We could not reveal a positive effect of EGCG on this secondary end point. Though, our progressive MS study has provided suggestion that EGCG may have a positive effect on the test performance in PASAT.³⁷ As cognitive decline in MS is an overwhelming and up to now unsolved problem, the effect of EGCG on improvement of cognitive function in MS should be investigated in a more sophisticated approach.

EGCG at a dose of up to 800 mg daily was safe and well tolerated in patients with RRMS when given as add-on to GA over 18 months. However, no effect on MRI or clinical measures of disease activity could be demonstrated. Possible explanations include an underestimation of effect size in sample size calculation and insufficient EGCG dosage. Given that recent studies reported beneficial effects on cognitive functions, further investigation of EGCG in MS focused on these aspects may be warranted. Future studies should use optimized dose regimens or newer formulations of EGCG that increase bioavailability and offer an improved safety profile, in particular with regard to liver toxicity.

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Judith Bellmann-Strobl, MD	Charité—Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Berlin, Germany	Major role in the acquisition of data; analyzed and interpreted the data; and drafted the manuscript for intellectual content
Friedemann Paul, MD	Charité—Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Berlin, Germany	Designed and conceptualized the study; major role in the acquisition of data; analyzed and interpreted the data; and drafted the manuscript for intellectual content
Jens Wuerfel, MD	University Basel, Basel, Switzerland	Designed and conceptualized the study; major role in the acquisition of data; and revised the manuscript for intellectual content
Jan Dörr, MD	Charité—Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Berlin, Germany	Designed and conceptualized the study; major role in the acquisition of data; and revised the manuscript for intellectual content
Carmen Infante-Duarte, PhD	Charité—Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Berlin, Germany	Designed and conceptualized the study; major role in the acquisition of data; analyzed and interpreted the data; and revised the manuscript for intellectual content
Elmira Heidrich, MD	Charité—Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Berlin, Germany	Analyzed and interpreted the data and revised the manuscript for intellectual content

Continued

Appendix (continued)

Name	Location	Contribution
Benedict Körtgen, MD	Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz, Germany	Analyzed and interpreted the data and revised the manuscript for intellectual content
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Appendix (continued)

Name	Location	Contribution
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