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Dear Ms Fuller

NICE HTA - Pemetrexed disodium for the treatment of malignant pleural mesothelioma - Assessment Report

The oncology community as represented by the Royal College of Radiologists, the Joint Collegiate Council on Clinical Oncology and the Royal College of Physicians have considered the Assessment Report on the above subject. We wish to make the following points.

1. We do feel that this document is rather long and this in itself limits its usefulness by reducing the numbers of people who would have time to read it and digest it.
2. The first 30 or so pages constitute a review of evidence that has been covered by many previous authors eg Ellis et al or Steele et al or the BTS Statement on Mesothelioma. This literature is well known to clinicians involved in treating Mesothelioma and we see little value in it being re-hashed for this report.
3. There is an error on page 27 - Nausea and Vomiting is not controlled, with 5HT3 antagonists in 80% of patients receiving Cisplatin at around 75mg per m². Data from controlled studies of Aprepitant (Jou Clin Oncol Vol 21 No 22 p4112) indicate complete response of 52% rising to 73% with the use of NK1 antagonist.
4. The reviewers' cut off date means it has not been possible to include the full published EORTC trial of the Cisplatin Raltitrexed versus Cisplatin (Jou Clin Oncol Vol 23 no 28 p6881) in the assessment. This trial showed almost equivalent results to the Pemetrexed study in terms of survival benefit of the combination versus single agent Cisplatin. Raltitrexed costs around £400 per course ie around a fifth to quarter that of pemetrexed.
5. We may not be qualified to understand all the complex economic modelling but feel we would arrive at a very similar conclusion using a 'back of envelope calculation' viz Pemetrexed platinum costs around £2000 a course and given for a median of 6 courses produces around a 3 month improvement in survival and therefore the cost of one year life gained is 6 (courses) times 4 (four 3 month periods in a year) times £2000 equals £48,000 very close to the authors' own estimate.

6. Really good evidence on QoL and cost will (hopefully) be obtained from the MSO1 trial but unfortunately Lilly did not sanction the use of Pemetrexed in this study (for obvious commercial reasons). However the trial results are unlikely to be available for at least 18 months minimum.

I trust these comments are of use.

Yours sincerely

Dr Rodney Burnham
Registrar