

PRESS RELEASE

NICE recommends a scheme to make bortezomib (Velcade) for multiple myeloma accessible to NHS patients

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) has today published a further consultation document as part of its appraisal of bortezomib (Velcade) for the treatment of multiple myeloma. The draft guidance recommends the use of Velcade for patients with multiple myeloma who respond well to treatment with the drug.

NICE's independent advisory committee has recommended that all suitable patients should be offered treatment. Patients showing a full or partial response to the drug should be kept on it and funded by the NHS. Patients showing a minimal or no response should be taken off the drug, and the drug costs refunded by the drug's manufacturer. The draft recommendations follow an evaluation of a refund scheme put forward by the drug's manufacturer. The final decision on whether to put the refund scheme into practice rests with the manufacturer and the Department of Health. The draft guidance is available for public consultation on the NICE website until 22 June.

Andrew Dillon, NICE Chief Executive, said: "We are aware of the challenge that the NHS faces in ensuring that patients can access expensive, but potentially effective, treatments for life-threatening conditions such as cancer. If the drug's manufacturer accepts the proposals we are consulting on today, it will mean that when the drug works well the NHS pays but when it doesn't the manufacturer should bear the cost. All patients suitable for treatment will get the chance to see if the drug works well for them."

Today's consultation document comes after an appeal from the drug's manufacturer against the previous draft was upheld. The Appeal Panel asked the Appraisal Committee to assess, among other things, the benefits of a refund scheme proposed by the drug's manufacturer.

Comments received during this consultation will be reviewed at the next independent advisory committee meeting, after which another draft will be issued against which appeals can be lodged. NICE expects to issue final guidance (pending any appeals) to the NHS in October 2007. Until NICE issues final guidance on the use of bortezomib for treating multiple myeloma, funding for it will continue to be determined at a local level, based on a local assessment of available evidence.

Ends

For more information call the NICE press office on 0207 067 5900 or out of hours on 07775 583 813.

Notes to Editors

About the Institute's draft guidance on the use of bortezomib (Velcade)

1. The draft guidance recommends that:
 - Bortezomib monotherapy is recommended as an option for the treatment of progressive multiple myeloma in people who have received at least one prior therapy and who have undergone, or are unsuitable for, bone marrow transplantation under both of the following circumstances.
 - The response to bortezomib is measured using serum M-protein after a maximum of four cycles of treatment, and treatment is continued only in people who have a reduction in serum M-protein of 50% or more (that is, a complete or partial response).
 - The manufacturer rebates the full cost of bortezomib for people who, after a maximum of four cycles of treatment, have less than a 50% reduction in serum M-protein (that is, less than a partial response).
 - People currently receiving bortezomib monotherapy who do not meet the criteria in paragraph 1.1 should have the option to continue therapy until they and their clinicians consider it appropriate to stop.
2. The draft guidance can be found at: <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/page.aspx?o=282557>.

About NICE

3. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) is the independent organisation responsible for providing national guidance on the promotion of good health and the prevention and treatment of ill health.
4. NICE produces guidance in three areas of health:
 - **public health** – guidance on the promotion of good health and the prevention of ill health for those working in the NHS, local authorities and the wider public and voluntary sector
 - **health technologies** – guidance on the use of new and existing medicines, treatments and procedures within the NHS
 - **clinical practice** – guidance on the appropriate treatment and care of people with specific diseases and conditions within the NHS.