

Issue date: August 2005

## **Irinotecan, oxaliplatin and raltitrexed for the treatment of advanced colorectal cancer**

Understanding NICE guidance –  
information for people with advanced colorectal  
cancer, their families and carers, and the public

## Ordering information

You can download the following documents from [www.nice.org.uk/TA093](http://www.nice.org.uk/TA093)

- This booklet – information for the public.
- The full guidance on this appraisal.
- A short version for healthcare professionals – the quick reference guide.
- The assessment report – details of all the studies that were looked at.

For printed copies of the quick reference guide or information for the public, phone the NHS Response Line on 0870 1555 455 and quote:

- N0906 (quick reference guide)
- N0907 (information for the public).

### **National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence**

MidCity Place  
71 High Holborn  
London  
WC1V 6NA

[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

ISBN 1-84629-073-2

© National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, August 2005. All rights reserved. This material may be freely reproduced for educational and not-for-profit purposes within the NHS.

No reproduction by or for commercial organisations is permitted without the express written permission of the Institute.

## Contents

<b>What is NICE guidance?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>What is advanced colorectal cancer?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>What are irinotecan, oxaliplatin and raltitrexed?</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>What has NICE recommended on irinotecan, oxaliplatin and raltitrexed?</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>What should I do next?</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Will NICE review its guidance?</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Further information</b>	<b>7</b>

## What is NICE guidance?

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. One of NICE's roles is to produce guidance (recommendations) on the use of medicines, medical equipment, diagnostic tests and clinical and surgical procedures within the NHS.

To produce this guidance, NICE looks at how well the medicine, equipment or procedure works and also how well it works in relation to how much it costs. This process is called an appraisal. The appraisal process involves the manufacturer of the medicine or equipment for which guidance is being produced and the organisations that represent the healthcare professionals, patients and carers who will be affected by the guidance.

NICE was asked to look at the available evidence on the use of three drugs – irinotecan, oxaliplatin and raltitrexed – to treat advanced colorectal cancer. NICE was asked to provide guidance that will help the NHS in England and Wales decide when these drugs should be used.

## What is advanced colorectal cancer?

The intestine or bowel is a long tube that food passes through while it is being digested. Undigested food eventually passes out of the anus as faeces (often called a 'stool'), and the colon and rectum are the last sections of the intestine before the anus.

Colorectal cancer is cancer of the colon or rectum. It is described as advanced if it is so large that it can not all be removed by an operation, or if it has spread to other parts of the body (the tumours that are in other parts of the body may be referred to as 'metastatic cancer').

Treatments for advanced colorectal cancer include chemotherapy, which involves giving various medicines to kill the cancer cells. Two medicines called 5-fluorouracil and folinic acid are often given together.

## **What are irinotecan, oxaliplatin and raltitrexed?**

Irinotecan, oxaliplatin and raltitrexed are three medicines used in chemotherapy for people with advanced colorectal cancer. Currently these medicines are licensed to be used in the following ways. Irinotecan may be given with 5-fluorouracil and folinic acid to people who have not had chemotherapy for advanced colorectal cancer before. It may also be given to people who have had chemotherapy with 5-fluorouracil and other medicines, but were not helped by it. Oxaliplatin may be given with 5-fluorouracil and folinic acid. Raltitrexed may be given to patients who cannot have 5-fluorouracil and folinic acid, for example because these medicines might have serious side effects.

## **What has NICE recommended on irinotecan, oxaliplatin and raltitrexed?**

During the appraisal, NICE's Appraisal Committee read and heard evidence from:

- good-quality studies of irinotecan, oxaliplatin and raltitrexed
- doctors with specialist knowledge of advanced colorectal cancer and its treatment
- individuals with specialist knowledge of the issues affecting people with advanced colorectal cancer

- organisations representing the views of people who will be affected by the guidance (because they have, or care for someone with, the condition or because they work in the NHS and are involved in providing care for people with the condition)
- the manufacturers of irinotecan, oxaliplatin and raltitrexed.

The evidence is summarised in the full guidance and additional information about the studies can be found in the assessment report for this appraisal (see 'Further information' section for details).

NICE has made the following recommendations about the use of irinotecan, oxaliplatin and raltitrexed to treat advanced colorectal cancer within the NHS in England and Wales.

Irinotecan and oxaliplatin are recommended as possible treatments for people with advanced colorectal cancer, if they are used in these ways:

- irinotecan is given with 5-fluorouracil and folinic acid to people who have not had chemotherapy for advanced colorectal cancer before, or given on its own to people who have already had chemotherapy
- oxaliplatin is always given with 5-fluorouracil and folinic acid.

Raltitrexed is not recommended for people with advanced colorectal cancer, unless they are taking part in a clinical trial.

## What should I do next?

If you or someone you care for has advanced colorectal cancer, you should discuss this guidance with your cancer specialist.

## Will NICE review its guidance?

Yes. The guidance will be reviewed in August 2008.

### Further information

The NICE website ([www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)) has further information about NICE and the full guidance on irinotecan, oxaliplatin and raltitrexed for the treatment of advanced colorectal cancer that has been issued to the NHS. The assessment report, which contains details of the studies that were looked at, is also available from the NICE website. A short version of the guidance (a 'quick reference guide') is available on the website and from the NHS Response Line (phone 0870 1555 455 and quote reference number N0906).

If you have access to the Internet, you can find more information about colorectal cancer on the NHS Direct website ([www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)). You can also phone NHS Direct on 0845 46 47.

**National Institute for  
Health and Clinical Excellence**

MidCity Place  
71 High Holborn  
London  
WC1V 6NA

[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

N0907 5k 1P Aug 2005

ISBN 1-84629-073-2