

Understanding NICE guidance

Information for people who use NHS services

Erlotinib for non-small-cell lung cancer

NICE 'technology appraisal guidance' advises on when and how drugs and other treatments should be used in the NHS.

This leaflet is about when **erlotinib** should be used to treat people with non-small-cell lung cancer (NSCLC) in the NHS in England and Wales. It explains guidance (advice) from NICE (the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence). It is written for people with NSCLC but it may also be useful for their families or carers or anyone with an interest in the condition.

It does not describe NSCLC or the treatments in detail – your specialist should discuss these with you. Some sources of further information and support are on the back page.

This may not be the only possible treatment for NSCLC. Your healthcare team should talk to you about whether it is suitable for you and about other treatment options available.

What has NICE said?

Erlotinib is recommended as an alternative to docetaxel for patients with non-small-cell lung cancer (NSCLC) who have already tried one chemotherapy regimen but it has not worked. Erlotinib should be used only when the manufacturer provides the drug at the same overall treatment cost as docetaxel. This cost includes the cost of giving the drug, treatments for any side effects and the cost of monitoring patients to check that treatment is working.

If the overall treatment cost is equal, specialists should discuss with patients the potential benefits and risks of erlotinib and docetaxel before deciding which treatment to use.

Erlotinib is not recommended for people with locally advanced or metastatic NSCLC who cannot take docetaxel and have already tried one chemotherapy regimen but it has not worked.

Erlotinib is not recommended for people who have already tried two chemotherapy regimens, including docetaxel, but they haven't worked.

Healthcare professionals should not stop prescribing erlotinib for people who were already taking it when the guidance was issued. These patients should be able to carry on taking erlotinib until they and their specialist decide that it is the right time to stop treatment.

Non-small-cell lung cancer

Cancer affecting the lungs is grouped into two main types depending on how it looks under the microscope: small-cell-lung cancer and NSCLC.

Symptoms of NSCLC include persistent coughing, coughing up blood, shortness of breath, chest pain, tiredness and weight loss.

Cancer that is described as being locally advanced or metastatic is cancer that has spread to the surrounding tissues or other parts of the body.

Erlotinib

Erlotinib (also known as Tarceva) is an anticancer drug. It works by attaching itself to an enzyme involved in cancer cell growth and stops the cancer from growing.

It is licensed for the treatment of patients with locally advanced or metastatic NSCLC after at least one chemotherapy regimen has been tried but has not worked.

Erlotinib is given orally, in the form of a tablet.

What does this mean for me?

When NICE recommends a treatment, the NHS must ensure it is available to those people it could help, normally within 3 months of the guidance being issued. So, if you have NSCLC and have already tried one chemotherapy regimen but it has not worked, you should be able to have the treatment on the NHS. Please see www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance if you appear to be eligible for the treatment but it is not available.

NICE looks at how well treatments work and also at how well they work in relation to how much they cost the NHS. There was evidence that erlotinib would not represent value for money for the NHS when offered to people with locally advanced or metastatic NSCLC who cannot take docetaxel, or people who have already tried two chemotherapy regimens, including docetaxel, but they haven't worked.

If you are already taking erlotinib for NSCLC, you should be able to continue taking it until you and your specialist decide it is the right time to stop.

More information

The organisations below can provide more information and support for people with NSCLC. Please note that NICE is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of any information or advice provided by these organisations.

- British Lung Foundation, 08458 50 50 20
www.lunguk.org
- Macmillan Cancer Support, 0808 808 2020
www.macmillan.org.uk
- The Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation, 0800 358 7200
www.roycastle.org
- Tenovus: the cancer charity, 0808 808 1010
www.tenovus.com

NHS Choices (www.nhs.uk) may be a good starting point for finding out more. Your local Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) may also be able to give you further advice and support.

About NICE

NICE produces guidance (advice) for the NHS about preventing, diagnosing and treating different medical conditions. The guidance is written by independent experts including healthcare professionals and people representing patients and carers. They consider all the research on the disease or treatment, talk to people affected by it, and consider the costs involved. Staff working in the NHS are expected to follow this guidance.

To find out more about NICE, its work and how it reaches decisions, see www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance

This leaflet and other versions of the guidance aimed at healthcare professionals are available at www.nice.org.uk/TA162

You can order printed copies of this leaflet from NICE publications (phone 0845 003 7783 or email publications@nice.org.uk and quote reference N1738).

We encourage NHS and voluntary sector organisations to use text from this leaflet in their own information about NSCLC.