

Understanding NICE guidance

Information for people who use NHS services

Bortezomib monotherapy for relapsed multiple myeloma

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

This leaflet is about when **bortezomib** should be used to treat people with relapsed multiple myeloma 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 relapsed multiple myeloma but it may also be useful for their families or carers or anyone with an interest in the condition.

It does not describe relapsed multiple myeloma 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 progressive multiple myeloma. Your healthcare team should talk to you about whether it is suitable for you and about other treatment options available.

What has NICE said?

Bortezomib monotherapy is recommended as a possible treatment for progressive multiple myeloma for people:

- whose multiple myeloma has relapsed for the first time after having one treatment, and
- who have had a bone marrow transplant, unless it is not suitable for them.

After not more than four cycles of treatment, a blood or urine test should be done to check how well the cancer has responded to bortezomib.

- Treatment should be continued only if there has been at least a partial response to the drug.
- The company that makes bortezomib should refund the cost of the drug to the NHS for people who have had less than a partial response.

Doctors should not stop prescribing bortezomib for people who do not meet the criteria above but who were already taking it when the guidance was issued. These patients should be able to carry on taking bortezomib until they and their doctors decide that it is the right time to stop treatment.

Relapsed multiple myeloma

Multiple myeloma is a type of cancer that develops from cells in the bone marrow. It is described as 'multiple' because it can occur in several places. 'Relapsed' means that the condition has stopped responding to a previous treatment. 'Progressive' means that it is getting worse.

In people with multiple myeloma a blood test for a protein produced by cancer cells (serum M protein) can show how the body is responding to treatment. If the amount of the protein drops by at least half, this is considered to be a 'partial response'. In some people a blood test may not be suitable so another test, for example a urine test, should be used.

Bortezomib

Bortezomib (Velcade) is an anticancer drug that belongs to a new type of drugs known as proteasome inhibitors. They stop cancer cells from growing and cause them to die.

Bortezomib is licensed for use as monotherapy (that is, on its own without other anticancer drugs). It is given in 'cycles' of four doses over 2 weeks followed by a 10-day break.

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 progressive multiple myeloma, and your doctor thinks that bortezomib is the right treatment for you, 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.

If your condition does not fit the criteria described in the box above, but you are already taking bortezomib for relapsed multiple myeloma, you should be able to continue taking it until you and your doctor decide it is the right time to stop.

More information

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

- Cancerbackup, 0808 800 1234, www.cancerbackup.org.uk
- Leukaemia CARE, 0800 169 6680, www.leukaemiacare.org.uk
- Myeloma UK, 0800 980 3332, www.myeloma.org.uk
- Rarer Cancers Forum, 01227 738279, www.rarercancers.org.uk

NHS Direct online (www.nhsdirect.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/TA129

You can order printed copies of this leaflet from the NHS Response Line (phone 0870 1555 455 and quote reference N1355).