

PRESS RELEASE

NICE appraisal of infliximab for acute ulcerative colitis

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) has today (17 December 2008) published guidance on the use of infliximab for acute exacerbations of ulcerative colitis.

Produced as part of its rapid single technology appraisal (STA) work programme the NICE guidance recommends the use of infliximab as an option for the treatment of acute exacerbations of severely active ulcerative colitis only in patients in whom ciclosporin is contraindicated or clinically inappropriate, based on a careful assessment of the risks and benefits of treatment in the individual patient. In people who do not meet this criteria, the guidance recommends that infliximab should only be used for the treatment of acute exacerbations of severely active ulcerative colitis as part of clinical trials.

Ulcerative colitis is a condition in which the lining of the large intestine becomes inflamed. The most common symptom is bloody diarrhoea and discomfort in the abdomen and an urgent or frequent need to empty the bowel may also occur. People with severely active ulcerative colitis need more than six bowel movements a day and have other symptoms such as a fast heart beat, fever and anaemia.

Infliximab is a drug that targets a substance in the body (TNF alpha) and helps to prevent it causing inflammation. Infliximab is indicated for intravenous use in adults whose ulcerative colitis has responded inadequately to conventional therapy (including corticosteroids and 6-mercaptopurine or azathioprine), or who are intolerant of or have medical contraindications to such therapies.

Professor Peter Littlejohns, NICE Clinical and Public Health Director and

Executive Lead for this guidance said: “Ulcerative colitis is an extremely debilitating disorder that is estimated to affect over 100,000 people in England and Wales. An acute manifestation of ulcerative colitis is defined as disease that requires hospitalisation or the consideration of urgent surgical intervention. Today’s guidance recommending the use of infliximab will ensure people with the condition are able to access a treatment of proven benefit.”

Ends

About the guidance

1. The infliximab guidance is available at: <http://www.nice.org.uk/TA163>

About NICE

2. 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.
3. 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.