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PRESS RELEASE

NICE appraisal of febuxostat for hyperuricaemia in people with gout

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) has today (17 December 2008) published guidance as part of its rapid single technology appraisal (STA) work programme on the use of febuxostat for the management of hyperuricaemia in people with gout.

The guidance recommends the use of febuxostat as an option for the management of chronic hyperuricaemia in gout for people who are intolerant of allopurinol, the drug currently used as standard first line therapy, or for whom allopurinol is contraindicated.

People with hyperuricaemia have too much of a substance called uric acid in their blood. Uric acid is produced when the body breaks down substances known as 'purines' (which are found naturally in the body and also in some foods and certain alcoholic drinks). If the body produces too much uric acid or gets rid of too little, it can build up and tiny crystals can form. Gout occurs when these crystals accumulate in the joints, causing pain, swelling and inflammation. Febuxostat works to lower the concentration of uric acid in the blood by reducing its formation.

Andrew Dillon, Chief Executive at NICE and Executive Lead for this guidance said: "Gout is generally acknowledged as being one of the most painful forms of arthritis and about 1.5% of the UK population currently suffers from the condition. The independent Committee carefully considered the evidence and concluded that

febuxostat represents an important new option for patients who suffer the debilitating effects of gout but for whom the current standard treatment is not appropriate.”

Ends

Further information: NICE press office, 0845 003 7782.

Notes for editors

About the guidance

1. The febuxostat guidance is available at: <http://www.nice.org.uk/TA164>
2. For the purposes of this guidance, intolerance of allopurinol is defined as adverse effects that are sufficiently severe to warrant its discontinuation, or to prevent full dose escalation for optimal effectiveness as appropriate within its marketing authorisation.

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.