

The use of capecitabine and tegafur with uracil for metastatic colorectal cancer

Understanding NICE guidance -
information for people with colorectal
cancer and the public

May 2003



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Issue date: May 2003

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Copies of this booklet can be ordered from the NHS Response Line; telephone 0870 1555 455 and quote reference number N0223. A version in Welsh and English is also available, reference number N0224. Mae fersiwn yn Gymraeg ac yn Saesneg ar gael hefyd, rhif cyfeirnod N0224. The NICE technology appraisal on which this information is based, *Guidance on the use of capecitabine and tegafur with uracil for metastatic colorectal cancer*, is available from the NICE website (www.nice.org.uk). Copies can also be obtained from the NHS Response Line, reference number N0221.

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Web: www.nice.org.uk

ISBN: 1-84257-296-2

Published by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence

May 2003

Icon Design

ABBA Litho

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What is NICE guidance?

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) is part of the NHS. It produces guidance for both the NHS and patients on the use of medicines, medical equipment, diagnostic tests and clinical and surgical procedures and under what circumstances they should be used.

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. Each appraisal takes about 12 months to complete.

NICE was asked to look at the available evidence on the medicines capecitabine and tegafur with uracil and provide guidance that would help the NHS in England and Wales decide when it should be used in people with metastatic colorectal cancer.

What is metastatic colorectal cancer?

In metastatic colorectal cancer, cancer cells have broken off from the main cancer in the abdomen and have been transported in the blood or lymph systems to distant sites where they have settled and formed new cancers (these are referred to as metastases or secondary cancers). This is an advanced stage of the cancer.

What medicines for colorectal cancer did NICE consider?

NICE looked at two medicines: capecitabine, and tegafur which is taken together with uracil.

Capecitabine is taken by mouth and tegafur with uracil can also be taken orally. Once in the body, both medicines are changed to the same substance, fluorouracil, which aims to stop cancer cells from dividing.

What has NICE recommended on the use of capecitabine and tegafur with uracil?

NICE has recommended that capecitabine or tegafur with uracil (and folinic acid), to be taken by mouth, should be among the first options considered for a person with metastatic colorectal cancer. The choice about which medicine to take should be made jointly by the patient and his or her doctor, and the patient should be informed about the options and the differences between the medicines so that he or she can be fully involved in the decision.

NICE also noted that the use of capecitabine and tegafur with uracil should be overseen by doctors specialising in the use of medicines for colorectal cancer.

What should I do?

If you are unsure about whether this guidance applies to you, then you should discuss it with your doctor/specialist at your next appointment.

Will NICE review its guidance?

Yes. This guidance will be reviewed in January 2006.

Further information

Further information on NICE, and the full guidance issued to the NHS is available on the NICE website (www.nice.org.uk). The full guidance can also be requested by phoning 0870 1555 455 and quoting reference N0221.

For further information on health matters, go to NHS Direct Online (www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk).



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