

28th February 2012

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Dear Jeremy,

This is the Department of Health's formal response to the consultation on NICE's Appraisal Consultation Document on abiraterone for the treatment of castration-resistant metastatic prostate cancer that has progressed on or after a docetaxel-containing regimen. I apologise that we are only able to send it after the deadline, but I hope that it can be considered.

In arriving at its draft recommendations, the Appraisal Committee concluded that the appraisal does not meet the eligibility criteria for the application of the flexibilities for potentially life extending drugs for patients at the end of their lives. I understand that this decision was arrived at on the basis that abiraterone is not licensed for a sufficiently small patient population. Whilst acknowledging that the applicability of the "end of life" criteria was far from the only factor influencing NICE's draft recommendation, it is clearly an important one and we would be grateful if the Appraisal Committee could carefully consider whether or not abiraterone meets the eligibility criteria NICE has set out.

In assessing the likely demand for abiraterone, the Committee may find it useful to know the level of clinical demand for abiraterone through the Cancer Drugs Fund. Between April 2011 and the end of January 2012, 904 patients received abiraterone through the Cancer Drugs Fund.

Yours sincerely,

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