



Omalizumab review by NICE - January 2012

Statement from Primary Care Respiratory Society UK:

The Primary Care Respiratory Society supports Asthma UK's submission to the review of omalizumab for use in people with severe persistent allergic asthma. We are not making our own submission as omalizumab is largely used by specialists for the very small proportion of patients in whom the standard range of asthma treatments is not successful. We are aware however that in these patients the impact of using omalizumab can be life-changing and can enable them to achieve a level of normal functioning that was previously not possible. We would support the continued use of omalizumab for such patients and would recommend that it is extended so that patients of all ages with such difficult to manage asthma are able to benefit. It is clear that omalizumab is being used responsibly only for those patients who will benefit, and we would like to see NICE reconsider its use in children between 6 and 11, so that younger patients are not disadvantaged. We recognise that there is a smaller evidence base for the use of omalizumab in children, but lack of evidence does not mean lack of effect, particularly when a full assessment has been made and other factors, such as compliance and psycho-social problems, have been addressed.

We agree with Asthma UK that the criterion of at least two hospital attendances or admissions in the previous 12 months may create perverse incentives for patients to seek hospital support, or may prompt hospitals to admit, when they would not otherwise do so. Reducing time spent in hospital for people with long term conditions, and specifically for young people under the age of 19 with asthma, are specific improvement areas in the Outcomes framework, so making admissions a prerequisite for omalizumab is counter productive. As care moves increasingly into the community and integrated care pathways develop, it would be illogical for people who need omalizumab to be denied it because of lack of hospital attendance.

Monday January 9, 2012