



Medicine: nivolumab (brand name: Opdivo®)

Bristol-Myers Squibb Pharmaceuticals Ltd

The Scottish Medicines Consortium (SMC) has assessed nivolumab to treat adults with untreated HER-2 negative gastric (stomach), gastroesophageal junction (junction between the gullet and the stomach) or oesophageal (gullet) adenocarcinoma (a type of cancer), that is advanced or metastatic (has spread to other parts of the body). Nivolumab is used together with a type of chemotherapy called fluoropyrimidine and platinum based chemotherapy. It is used where the tumour produces a high level of a protein called PD-L1 (CPS \geq 5). This document summarises the SMC decision and what it means for patients.

What has SMC said?

After careful consideration, SMC has accepted nivolumab for treating adults with gastric, gastro-oesophageal junction or oesophageal adenocarcinoma as described above.

This SMC advice takes into account a confidential discount offered by the pharmaceutical company that improves the cost-effectiveness of nivolumab. In addition, SMC was able to apply a more [flexible approach](#)* in the assessment, as it is for a condition where patients are likely to have a life expectancy of less than three years with currently available treatments.

What does SMC's decision mean for patients?

If your healthcare professional thinks that nivolumab for use as described above is the right medicine for you, you should be able to have the treatment on the NHS in Scotland.



What is nivolumab used for?

Nivolumab is used together with chemotherapy to treat adults with advanced gastric cancer (stomach cancer), oesophageal cancer (cancer of the gullet, which is the hollow muscular tube that carries food from the mouth to the stomach), or cancer of the junction between the gullet and the stomach (gastroesophageal junction). It is for a type of cancer known as adenocarcinoma which starts in mucous producing cells. Nivolumab is used where the tumour has a high level of a protein called PD-L1 (which protects tumour cells from attack by the immune system) and does not have a high level of a protein called HER2 (known as HER2-negative).

*<https://www.scottishmedicines.org.uk/how-we-decide/pace/>

How does nivolumab work?

Nivolumab is an immunotherapy. This is a type of cancer treatment that stimulates the immune system (the body's natural defence system) to fight the cancer. Some tumours produce proteins that switch off certain immune cells (called T-cells). Nivolumab attaches to these T-cells, which stops the cancer switching them off, and helps the immune system fight the cancer.

How does SMC make its decision?

SMC carefully considers every new medicine to make sure it benefits patients and is considered to be an acceptable use of the limited resources in NHSScotland.

To do this SMC considers the following:

- Evidence from the company about how well the medicine works compared with current treatments available in Scotland, in relation to how much they will cost to buy and administer.
- Information from patient groups about the potential impact of the medicine on patients and carers.
- Advice from healthcare professionals about any benefits of the new medicine compared to current treatment, along with how the new medicine is likely to be used.

When SMC assesses a medicine it takes account of the needs of all patients in NHSScotland, not just those who may be treated with the medicine under consideration.

You can find more detailed information about the SMC assessment of nivolumab by looking at the SMC Detailed Advice Document (SMC2458).

More information

The organisations below can provide more information and support for people with oesophageal cancer and their families. SMC is not responsible for the content of any information provided by external organisations.

OCHRE



<http://www.ochrecharity.org.uk>



0800 822 3370

Guts UK Charity



<https://gutscharity.org.uk>



0207 486 0341

You can find out more about nivolumab (Opdivo®) in the Patient Leaflet (PIL) by searching for the medicine the electronic medicines compendium (EMC) website.



<https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/>