

# Medicine: pembrolizumab (brand name: Keytruda<sup>®</sup>) with chemotherapy for metastatic non-squamous non-small cell lung cancer

Merck Sharp & Dohme Ltd

## What is pembrolizumab used for?

Pembrolizumab was considered for the initial treatment of a type of lung cancer called non-squamous non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) that is metastatic (has spread to other parts of the body). Pembrolizumab is used together with two types of chemotherapy (pemetrexed and platinum containing chemotherapy). It is not used for the initial treatment of patients with NSCLC who have cancer cells with specific genetic changes, known as ALK or EGFR mutations.

## How does pembrolizumab work?

Pembrolizumab 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 cancer cells produce proteins that switch off certain immune cells (called T-cells). Pembrolizumab attaches to these T cells, which stops the cancer switching them off, and helps the immune system fight the cancer.

### What has SMC said?

SMC has not recommended pembrolizumab for the initial treatment of NSCLC in adults, as described above.



## Why has SMC said this?

SMC looks at how well new medicines work compared with current treatments available in Scotland and in relation to how much they will cost to buy and administer (for example, if the medicine has to be given at a clinic or side effects have to be monitored).

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. 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.

To do this SMC consider the following:

- Clinical trial and economic evidence from the company that makes the medicine.

- 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.
- Information from patient groups about the potential impact of the medicine on patients and carers.

After careful consideration, SMC decided the evidence provided by the company was not strong enough to be certain that pembrolizumab offers value for money to NHSScotland. This was despite applying extra flexibility as pembrolizumab is a medicine for an end of life condition.

### What does SMC's decision mean for me?

Pembrolizumab should not normally be prescribed on the NHS in Scotland for use as described above. Your healthcare professional should talk to you about other treatment options available to you. If he or she believes that pembrolizumab would be of benefit, he or she can make a request to prescribe it for you. All health boards have procedures in place to consider these requests. For further information see:

Medicines in Scotland: What's the right treatment for me?

[www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/medicinesbooklet.aspx](http://www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/medicinesbooklet.aspx)



### More information

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

#### Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation



<https://www.roycastle.org>



0333 323 7200

#### Scottish Lung Cancer Nurses Forum



<https://www.nlcfn.org.uk>



01675 477607

You can find out more about pembrolizumab in the European public assessment report (EPAR) summary for the public by searching for the medicine name on the European Medicines Agency (EMA) website.



<http://www.ema.europa.eu>

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