



# Medicine: pembrolizumab (brand name: Keytruda<sup>®</sup>) with chemotherapy for metastatic 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 squamous non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) that is metastatic (has spread to other parts of the body). In this assessment pembrolizumab was considered for use together with chemotherapy.

Pembrolizumab has previously been accepted by SMC for use for the initial treatment of metastatic NSCLC, for up to 2 years, in some patients whose tumours produce high levels of a protein called PD-L1. For more information about this decision, see the SMC advice for medicine number [1239/17](#).

## 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 accepted pembrolizumab in combination with chemotherapy for the initial treatment of metastatic squamous NSCLC in adults. This acceptance is restricted to use for up to 2 years, in combination with two types of chemotherapy (carboplatin and paclitaxel) in patients:

- whose tumours either do not produce PD-L1 or produce low levels of PD-L1; or
- where it has not been possible to measure the amount of PD-L1 produced.



## 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, applying extra flexibility because pembrolizumab is a medicine for an end of life condition, and after the company applied a confidential discount to the cost of the medicine, SMC was able to accept pembrolizumab as a possible treatment within NHSScotland.

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

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

**Date advice published:** 9 September 2019

**SMC No:** SMC2187