



Medicine: nivolumab (brand name: Opdivo®)

Bristol-Myers Squibb Pharmaceuticals Limited

The Scottish Medicines Consortium (SMC) has assessed nivolumab for the initial (first-line) treatment of adults with non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) that is metastatic (has spread to other parts of the body). Nivolumab is used together with ipilimumab and two cycles of platinum-based chemotherapy to treat patients whose cancer cells do not have changes in the *EGFR* or *ALK* genes. This document summarises the SMC decision and what it means for patients.

What has SMC said?

After careful consideration, SMC has not recommended nivolumab for treating adults with NSCLC as described above.

SMC was unable to accept nivolumab because the evidence provided by the company was not strong enough to satisfy the committee that it offers value for money to NHSScotland. This was despite using 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?

Nivolumab should not normally be prescribed on the NHS in Scotland for use as described above. If a patient's healthcare professional thinks a particular patient would benefit from it, they can make a request to prescribe nivolumab. 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



What is nivolumab used for?

Nivolumab is used to treat a type of lung cancer called NSCLC. Nivolumab is used together with ipilimumab (a type of immunotherapy medicine) and two cycles of platinum-based chemotherapy, for first-line treatment when the cancer has spread to other parts of the body (is metastatic). It is not used for patients whose cancer cells have changes in the *EGFR* or *ALK* genes as these patients will receive targeted treatments.

*<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 cancer cells produce proteins that switch off immune cells. Nivolumab attaches to a protein called PD-1 on the immune 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 only 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 (SMC2397).

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://roycastle.org>



0333 323 7200

Scottish Lung Cancer Nurses Forum – affiliated to Lung Cancer Nursing UK



<https://www.lcnuk.org>



01675 477607

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



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