



## Medicine: nivolumab (brand name: Opdivo®)

Bristol-Myers Squibb Pharmaceuticals Ltd

The Scottish Medicines Consortium (SMC) has assessed nivolumab for the adjuvant treatment (treatment given after surgery to lower risk of the cancer coming back), of adults with oesophageal cancer or cancer of the junction between the oesophagus and the stomach (gastro-oesophageal junction) where the cancer has been surgically removed (completely resected) but where there were still some cancer cells left despite neoadjuvant chemoradiotherapy (chemotherapy and radiotherapy given before surgery to reduce the size of the tumour). This document summarises the SMC decision and what it means for patients.

### What has SMC said?

After careful consideration, SMC accepted nivolumab for treating adults with oesophageal cancer as described above.

This SMC advice takes into account a confidential discount offered by the pharmaceutical company that improves the cost-effectiveness of nivolumab.

### 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 to treat oesophageal cancer. Oesophageal cancer is cancer that develops in cells of the gullet (the muscular tube that food passes through that connects the mouth to the stomach). Nivolumab is used to treat oesophageal cancer and gastro-oesophageal junction cancer after chemotherapy, radiotherapy and surgery. It is used in patients after surgery, where some cancer remained despite the patient having initially received chemotherapy and radiotherapy (neoadjuvant chemoradiotherapy).

### 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 called T-cells. Nivolumab attaches to a protein on the T-cells called

PD-1. This stops the cancer from switching off the T-cells, helping 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 (SMC2429).

## More information

The organisation 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



<https://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 by searching for the medicine name on the electronic medicines compendium (EMC) website.



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