NHS

South Central Priorities Committees
(Southampton, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth PCTs)

Policy Recommendation 71: Bendamustine in the treatment of relapsed or refractory non-Hodgkin's lymphoma

Date of issue: April 2010

The Southampton, Hampshire, Isle of Wight and Portsmouth Priorities Committee has considered the evidence for the use of Bendamustine in the treatment of relapsed or refractory non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and recommends that it should be LOW PRIORITY, because of lack of evidence of clinical effectiveness.

The non-Hodgkin's lymphomas (NHL) are a clinically and biologically diverse group of malignant diseases where the proliferating cell type is lymphoid. Some forms of NHL are indolent (low-grade) where life-expectancy is usually in the order of years but there is little prospect of cure; whereas others are more aggressive (high-grade) with shorter untreated life-expectancy (but paradoxically having some prospect of cure) and requiring much more intensive treatment. For most patients, treatment involves a number of different courses of chemotherapy leading to disease remissions or responses of variable duration.

Bendamustine is an alkylating agent that has been in use in Eastern Europe for over 30 years, but only actively researched since the early 1990s. It appears to have little cross-resistance with other alkylating agents and therefore has a theoretical advantage in patients whose disease is already refractory to, or has relapsed following treatment with other alkylating agents.

At the time of this review, bendamustine is not licensed for use in the UK, although it is being made available without cost on a compassionate basis.

The evidence of clinical effectiveness for the use of bendamustine in relapsed or refractory NHL is limited by the lack of comparative studies. The small single arm non-randomised studies that have been identified did not even have matched historical controls. There is no published evidence for cost-effectiveness.

Bendamustine is currently being scoped on the NICE work programme. It is not known whether it will proceed to a technology appraisal.

NOTES:

1. *Exceptional circumstances may be considered where there is evidence of significant health impairment and there is also evidence of the intervention improving health status.*
2. *This policy will be reviewed in the light of new evidence or guidance from NICE.*