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Capecitabine and oxaliplatin in the adjuvant treatment of stage III (Dukes' C) colon cancer

Understanding NICE guidance –
information for people with stage III colon cancer,
their families and carers, and the public

Ordering information

You can download the following documents from www.nice.org.uk/TA100

- This booklet.
- The full guidance on this appraisal.
- A short version for healthcare professionals – the quick reference guide.
- The assessment report – details of all the studies that were looked at.

For printed copies of the quick reference guide or information for the public, phone the NHS Response Line on 0870 1555 455 and quote:

- N1026 (quick reference guide)
- N1027 (information for the public).

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What is NICE guidance?

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) is the independent organisation responsible for providing national guidance on the promotion of good health and the prevention and treatment of ill health. One of NICE's roles is to produce guidance (recommendations) on the use of medicines, medical equipment, diagnostic tests and clinical and surgical procedures within the NHS.

To produce this guidance, NICE looks at how well the medicine, equipment or procedure works and also how well it works in relation to how much it costs. This process is called an appraisal. The appraisal process involves the manufacturer of the medicine or equipment for which guidance is being produced and the organisations that represent the healthcare professionals, patients and carers who will be affected by the guidance.

NICE was asked to look at the available evidence on the use of capecitabine and the use of oxaliplatin in the treatment of stage III colon cancer. NICE was asked to provide guidance that will help the NHS in England and Wales decide when capecitabine and oxaliplatin should be used.

What is colon cancer?

The intestine (or bowel) is a long tube that food passes through while it is being digested. The colon is the longest part of the large intestine, ending just before the rectum and anus.

Colon cancer is a malignant cancer that grows in the wall of the colon. Stage III colon cancer (also called Dukes' C) is when the cancer has spread from the colon to the lymph nodes, but not to other parts of the body.

Treatments for stage III colon cancer include surgery to remove the cancer, and additional treatments (known as adjuvant treatments) such as chemotherapy, which uses powerful drugs to kill any remaining cancer cells or stop the cancer coming back.

What are capecitabine and oxaliplatin?

Capecitabine and oxaliplatin are two medicines used in chemotherapy for people with colon cancer. Capecitabine is taken as tablets, and is used as an adjuvant treatment for people who have had surgery for stage III (Dukes' stage C) colon cancer. It is also used as a first treatment for metastatic colorectal cancer (cancer that has spread from the colon or rectum to other parts of the body).

Oxaliplatin is given by injection into a vein, and is used with two other medicines, 5-fluorouracil and folinic acid. It can be used for the adjuvant treatment of stage III (Dukes' C) colon cancer after the original cancer has been completely removed by surgery. It can also be used to treat metastatic colorectal cancer.

What has NICE recommended on capecitabine and oxaliplatin?

During the appraisal, NICE's Appraisal Committee read and heard evidence from:

- studies of capecitabine and oxaliplatin
- doctors with specialist knowledge of colon cancer and its treatment
- individuals with specialist knowledge of the issues affecting people with colon cancer
- organisations representing the views of people who will be affected by the guidance (because they have, or care for someone with, the condition or because they work in the NHS and are involved in providing care for people with the condition)
- the manufacturers of capecitabine and oxaliplatin.

The evidence is summarised in the full guidance and additional information about the studies can be found in the assessment report for this appraisal (see 'Further information' section for details).

NICE has made the following recommendations about the use of capecitabine and oxaliplatin to treat stage III (Dukes' C) colon cancer within the NHS in England and Wales.

Capecitabine and oxaliplatin are recommended as possible adjuvant treatments after surgery for stage III (Dukes' C) colon cancer, when used in the following ways:

- capecitabine on its own
- oxaliplatin together with 5-fluorouracil and folinic acid.

The choice of treatment should be decided jointly by the individual and their doctors, after they have discussed the options. This discussion should cover any contraindications to the treatments (reasons why a particular medicine might not be suitable for the person), the possible side effects of the treatments, and the different ways they can be given. It should also take into account the person's clinical condition and individual preferences.

What should I do next?

If you or someone you care for has colon cancer, you should discuss this guidance with your (or their) GP or specialist.

Will NICE review its guidance?

Yes. The guidance will be reviewed in June 2009.

Further information

The NICE website (www.nice.org.uk) has further information about NICE and the full guidance on capecitabine and oxaliplatin in the adjuvant treatment of stage III (Dukes' C) colon cancer that has been issued to the NHS. The assessment report, which contains details of the studies that were looked at, is also available from the NICE website. A short version of the guidance (a 'quick reference guide') is available on the website and from the NHS Response Line (phone 0870 1555 455 and quote reference number N1026).

You can find more information about colon cancer and chemotherapy on the NHS Direct website (www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk). You can also phone NHS Direct on 0845 46 47.



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