Sent: 06 November 2006 09:05
To: Christopher Feinmann

Subject: NICE appraisal of fludarabine in CLL

Dear Dr Feinmann

Thank you for inviting me to comment on the provisional guidance on the use of fludarabine in the first-line treatment of CLL.

I am sorry to say that I think NICE have made a grave tactical error in restricting the appraisal to fludarabine monotherapy. By choosing to make an issue out of a licensing technicality, NICE is effectively denying CLL patients in the UK access to a therapeutic regimen that the whole world considers to be the new gold standard. This would be bad for patients, bad for future clinical trials, and bad for UK credibility in the international arena. I could understand NICE's position more easily if there was a major cost implication, but there isn't! The current license for fludarabine does not specify that the drug should not be used in combination with other chemotherapeutic agents, and the latter idea is adequately covered in the cyclophosphamide license. Based on these considerations, my strong and clear advice as one of the nominated expert advisors involved in the appraisal is that NICE should retract its provisional recommendations and issue new guidance that takes into account the overwhelming body of data supporting the use fludarabine in combination with cyclophosphamide in the first-line setting.

Yours sincerely

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