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National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence

## **Health Technology Appraisal**

### **Appraisal of pemetrexed disodium for the treatment of mesothelioma**

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Comments provided by Liz Darlinson, Nurse Consultant (Mesothelioma)

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#### **Introduction**

With a membership of over 380,000 registered nurses, midwives, health visitors, nursing students, health care assistants and nurse cadets, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) is the voice of nursing across the UK and the largest professional union of nursing staff in the world. The RCN promotes patient and nursing interests on a wide range of issues by working closely with Government, the UK parliaments and other national and European political institutions, trade unions, professional bodies and voluntary organisations.

#### **Comments on the Appraisal Consultation Document**

We are very disappointed with the preliminary recommendations of the Appraisal Committee regarding pemetrexed.

The arrival and licensing of pemetrexed offered a glimmer of hope for Mesothelioma patients in that it may pave the way for more trials and more drugs to follow to add to the weak evidence base currently underpinning chemotherapy treatment in Mesothelioma.

Mesothelioma patients experience poor survival often regardless of what treatment they receive, they enter into treatment with the aim of minimizing or avoiding nasty

symptoms for as long as it is possible. They do not survive long enough or have the strength to have their voice heard in the manner that breast cancer patients do. This decision adds almost unbearably to the injustice that they are already subjected to.

We are not aware of any trials currently involved nationally using pemetrexed and planning such a trial, getting it through ethics and designing a trial suitable for all patients is an enormous lengthy task. Granted pemetrexed does not hold all the answers for all Mesothelioma patients but it offers an evidence based option for some and it is our view that cancer experts should be afforded the option to use their clinical judgment to prescribe it where they and their patients consider it appropriate.

We would urge the Committee to reconsider its recommendations.