ARTHRITIS CARE

Response to the ACD relating to the Multiple Technology Appraisal (MTA) Adalimumab, etanercept, infliximab, certolizumab pegol, golimumab, abatacept and tocilizumab for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis (review of TA guidance 130, 186, 224, 234 and part review of TA guidance 225 and 247) [ID537]

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Appraisal Consultation Document relating to the above MTA.

The main recommendation of the ACD supports the current position that these drugs remain available only to those most severely affected.

While Arthritis Care welcomes the committee having taken into account the additional evidence to ensure the continuation of these drugs, we believe an opportunity has been missed to extend their use for people with moderate disease who experience the same painful and debilitating symptoms of RA.

This position means that the UK remains an outlier in Western Europe where there is greater access to these drugs. We believe that there is no economic or clinical justification for this to continue as the NICE ACD clearly shows that the formula used to demonstrate cost-effectiveness for the NHS gives very similar results for both severe and moderate patient groups.

We believe that it is false economy not to treat patients with moderate disease with biologic therapy when standard DMARDS fail as these people will be higher users of healthcare resources. These patients will require more attendance to primary and secondary care, and are more likely to develop co-morbidities such as osteoporosis, heart disease and have more surgery.

They are also much more likely to lose their jobs causing financial hardship and some may also face earlier mortality, as uncontrolled disease decreases life-span by 6 – 10 years. The personal costs to the individual, the NHS, the impact on the rest of their family and the direct cost to the exchequer in lost productivity and benefits claims is considerable. These treatments could restore quality of life and enable people to remain in work, help look after their families and contribute fully to society.