



A good decision from NICE on antiTNF treatments for Crohn's Disease

NICE – the body that decides whether and how medicines should be made available in the NHS - has just published its recommendations on adalimumab (Humira) and infliximab (Remicade) for Crohn's Disease. NACC welcomes the recommendations which provide a very sound basis for the use of these treatments for people who have Crohn's Disease and which will enable decisions to be taken by patients and their doctors together taking all the clinical information into account. This is an excellent outcome for patients.

The recommendations are as follows:

Infliximab and adalimumab may be used for adults who have severe active Crohn's Disease and who have not responded to steroids or immunosuppressive drugs. Infliximab may be used for children in similar circumstances (adalimumab is not currently licensed for children.) Infliximab may also be used for people who have fistulising Crohn's Disease.

Patients can be given a planned course of treatment for up to one year if required and then their treatment has to be reassessed to see whether ongoing treatment is still clinically appropriate. Treatment can be continued if there is clear evidence of ongoing disease. If patients are in a stable remission then the clinician and patient should consider a trial of stopping treatment. If the patient's disease relapses after treatment is stopped they should have the option to start treatment again.

For NACC the most important aspect of the decision is that it emphasises the importance of the doctor and patient discussing together the effectiveness and safety of antiTNF treatment at regular intervals and reaching a decision together about future treatment.

The NICE Guidance also states that treatment should normally be started using whichever is the cheaper of the two medicines, which may vary between hospitals and patients, and that anti TNF medicines should only be started and reviewed by clinicians with experience of TNF inhibitors and of managing Crohn's disease.

Among other recommendations for future research the NICE Appraisal Committee stated that a Register should be set up to monitor people who receive TNF inhibitors for the treatment of Crohn's Disease in order to obtain data on long-term outcomes and relapse rates after withdrawal.

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