

Cancer specialists appeal to NICE over Vidaza

Thirty-two international MDS Centres of Excellence have written to the National Cancer Director to support better access to Vidaza (azacitidine) for UK patients.

International haematologists and cancer specialists from the hospitals expressed their concern at the NICE decision not to recommend Vidaza for the treatment of myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS), a group of debilitating bone marrow diseases.

They argued that barriers to patient access for treatments for rarer diseases are still too high in the UK, especially as Vidaza is already widely available to clinicians in Europe.

In its decision, NICE recognised that azacitidine was clinically effective and that it should be seen as a life-extending end-of-life treatment, but decided that it should not be provided through the NHS on cost-effectiveness grounds.

Azacitidine is the only licensed medicine proven to prolong survival for people with higher risk MDS and

could be suitable for 700 patients per year in England and Wales. It has been shown to improve patients' quality of life, reduce dependence on blood transfusions and be less toxic than chemotherapy.

The MDS UK Patient Group was one of eight organisations to present a 655-signature petition to David Cameron appealing against the NICE decision on 1 June. The letter urged NICE to allow the appeal and to re-appraise and recommend azacitidine as a "highly valued, innovative treatment" for higher-risk MDS.

David Hall, Chairman of the MDS UK Patient Support Group and MDS patient, said: "It is very heartening to have this level of international support from such respected clinicians and centres which have been designated Centres of Excellence for the treatment of MDS.

"We believe that the NICE decision was unreasonable given the evidence available and that it was incompatible with human rights."



(L-R) Myeloid Clinical Nurse Specialist Janet Hayden, Professor Rodney Taylor, Deputy Chairman of MDS UK Patient Support Group, Sophie Wintrich, Patient Liaison at the MDS Foundation, Dr Samir Agrawal, Senior Lecturer and Honorary Consultant in Haematology