

Benralizumab and mepolizumab for treating severe eosinophilic asthma

WHAT DOES THE GUIDANCE SAY?

Benralizumab and mepolizumab are not recommended for listing on the Medication Assistance Fund (MAF) for government subsidy for treating severe eosinophilic asthma.

WHY WERE THEY NOT RECOMMENDED FOR SUBSIDY?

ACE evaluates how well a treatment works in relation to how much it costs compared to other treatments. Benralizumab and mepolizumab were not recommended for government subsidy because their benefits for patients do not justify their high costs.

IS THIS TREATMENT RIGHT FOR ME?

There are different types of treatments available for severe asthma. Your doctor may recommend you take benralizumab or mepolizumab when other drugs cannot adequately control your condition.

Your doctor should give you clear information, listen to your views and concerns, and talk to you about your treatment options. Your family can also be involved in the discussion if you wish.

Some of the questions you may want to ask your doctor when making decisions about your care are:

- How will the treatment affect my day-to-day activities?
- How well does it work compared to other treatments?
- What are the side effects and risks of treatment, and how likely are they?
- How long will I need to be on the treatment for?
- What happens if the treatment stops working?
- What happens if I do not want to have treatment?

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WHAT IS SEVERE EOSINOPHILIC ASTHMA?

Asthma is a chronic inflammatory condition that affects the airways in the lungs. It may result in an asthma attack with symptoms such as wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness and coughing. Some people with asthma have too many eosinophils (a type of white blood cell) in the blood and lungs. This condition is called eosinophilic asthma.

Despite receiving daily asthma medication, some people experience frequent or life threatening asthma attacks and persistent symptoms that affect their daily activities. This is considered to be severe eosinophilic asthma. These patients may need additional medications to control their asthma symptoms and reduce asthma attacks.

WHAT ARE BENRALIZUMAB AND MEPOLIZUMAB?

You may know benralizumab as Fasena[®] and mepolizumab as Nucala[®]. They are drugs that belong to a group of medicines called biologics. Benralizumab and mepolizumab help to reduce eosinophils in the blood and lungs which contribute to your asthma, thereby reducing the number of asthma attacks.

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ACE is the national health technology assessment agency under the Ministry of Health (Singapore). It publishes guidances on diagnosing, treating, and preventing different medical conditions based on the latest research information available worldwide.

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