

Plain English Summary

Bevacizumab for treating advanced cervical cancer

What does the guidance say?

Bevacizumab reference biologic (Avastin) is not recommended for government subsidy for treating persistent, recurrent or metastatic cervical cancer.

Bevacizumab biosimilar (Mvasi) has previously been recommended for listing on the Standard Drug List (SDL) for all approved conditions, including cervical cancer.

Why was bevacizumab (Avastin) not recommended for subsidy?

ACE evaluates how well a treatment works in relation to how much it costs compared to other treatments. Bevacizumab reference biologic (Avastin) was not recommended for subsidy because its benefit does not justify its cost compared to bevacizumab biosimilar (Mvasi).

Mvasi has already been recommended for listing on SDL. Drugs on SDL are subsidised at 50% for all Singaporean citizens who are treated in a public healthcare institution. Patients from lower to middle income households may receive a higher subsidy up to 75%.

What is cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer occurs when cells grow uncontrollably and form a mass (tumour) in the cervix, the lower part of the womb (uterus). Symptoms can include heavy periods, abnormal bleeding in between periods, and pain.

Treatment for cervical cancer depends on how far the cancer has spread in the cervix and if it has spread to other parts of the body (metastatic disease). In about 30% of patients, the cancer can worsen or come back again after treatment. This is known as persistent or recurrent cervical cancer.

What is bevacizumab?

Bevacizumab belongs to a group of biologic medicines called vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) inhibitors that stop cells from growing blood vessels and can slow or shrink cancer growth. It is given as a drip into a vein (intravenously), usually as part of a combination of cancer medicines for patients with cervical cancer whose condition has worsened despite previous treatment.

Mvasi is a biosimilar of bevacizumab (Avastin). Biosimilars are highly similar but not identical to their reference biologics (i.e., the first biologic developed). Biosimilars have similar effectiveness, safety and quality records compared to their reference biologics and can be used to treat the same diseases.

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Which treatment is right for me?

There are different types of treatments for cervical cancer. Your doctor may recommend you take a drug that is not subsidised such as bevacizumab (Avastin) if 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.

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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The Agency for Care Effectiveness (ACE) was established by the Ministry of Health (Singapore) to drive better decision-making in healthcare through health technology assessment (HTA), clinical guidance and education. It publishes guidances on diagnosing, treating, and preventing different medical conditions based on the latest research information available worldwide.

This summary is not, and should not be regarded as, a substitute for professional or medical advice. Please seek the advice of a qualified healthcare professional about any medical condition.

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