

## Plain English Summary

# Treatments for advanced hepatocellular carcinoma

## What does the guidance say?

Sorafenib is recommended for listing on the Standard Drug List (SDL), and cabozantinib, lenvatinib and regorafenib are recommended for listing on the Medication Assistance Fund (MAF) for government funding for patients with advanced hepatocellular carcinoma who meet certain criteria.

Subsidy will be available for sorafenib and regorafenib from 4 January 2022, and from 1 September 2022 for cabozantinib and lenvatinib.

Nivolumab alone or in combination with ipilimumab, pembrolizumab and ramucirumab are not recommended for subsidy for this condition.

## What is hepatocellular carcinoma?

Hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) is the most common type of liver cancer. It occurs when cells grow uncontrollably and form a mass (tumour) in the liver. People with chronic liver disease, such as cirrhosis (scarring of the liver), are at greater risk of developing HCC.

People with HCC may not have any symptoms initially. As the cancer worsens, symptoms can include unexplained weight loss, yellowing of the skin or eyes (jaundice), fatigue and pain.

If you have HCC, your doctor will find out how well your liver is working using the Child-Pugh classification system. The results will help your doctor decide which treatment is best for your condition.

Some people with HCC can have surgery to remove the tumour from the liver. If the tumour has spread to other parts of the body and cannot be removed (unresectable), this is known as advanced disease.

## What are cabozantinib, lenvatinib, regorafenib and sorafenib?

Cabozantinib, lenvatinib, regorafenib and sorafenib belong to a group of medicines called tyrosine kinase inhibitors that help to slow or stop the growth of cancer cells. All four treatments are taken orally.

Your doctor will tell you which treatment is most suitable for you, how much you need to take and how long you need to take it for.

## Who can have these treatments?

Patients with HCC that cannot be removed with surgery can have lenvatinib or sorafenib. Cabozantinib and regorafenib are used for patients who have had other treatments before, but their condition has worsened. Patients must have adequate liver function according to the Child-Pugh classification system before starting any treatment.

Your doctor can advise if any of these treatments are suitable for you.

## Plain English Summary

# Treatments for advanced hepatocellular carcinoma

## Why were these treatments recommended for funding?

ACE evaluates how well a treatment works in relation to how much it costs compared to other treatments. Cabozantinib, lenvatinib, regorafenib and sorafenib were recommended because their benefit in improving survival for certain patients with advanced HCC justifies their costs.

Nivolumab alone or in combination with ipilimumab, pembrolizumab and ramucirumab were not recommended for subsidy because their benefits are uncertain or do not justify their costs. If you need one of these treatments for HCC, you can speak to a medical social worker to find out if there is other financial assistance available to help with the cost of treatment.

## What does listing on SDL or MAF mean for me?

Sorafenib has been listed on the Standard Drug List (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 up to 75% subsidy.

Cabozantinib, lenvatinib and regorafenib have been listed on the Medication Assistance Fund (MAF). The MAF helps people pay for expensive treatments that are clinically necessary. If your doctor prescribes any of these treatments for you, and you meet the MAF criteria, your treatment cost will be subsidised by 40% to 75%.

All four drugs have also been included on the Cancer Drug List (CDL) and are claimable under MediShield Life. The subsidy class and MediShield Life claim limits are available at [go.gov.sg/moh-cancer-drug-list](http://go.gov.sg/moh-cancer-drug-list).

**Updated: 19 December 2022**

**First published: 4 January 2022**

 Agency for Care Effectiveness - ACE

 Agency for Care Effectiveness (ACE)

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.

© Agency for Care Effectiveness, Ministry of Health, Republic of Singapore  
All rights reserved. Reproduction of this publication in whole or part in any material form is prohibited without the prior written permission of the copyright holder.

To find out more about ACE visit [www.ace-hta.gov.sg](http://www.ace-hta.gov.sg)