

Plain English Summary

Ruxolitinib for treating polycythaemia vera

What does the guidance say?

Ruxolitinib is not recommended for listing on the Medication Assistance Fund (MAF) for government funding for patients with polycythaemia vera.

What is polycythaemia vera?

Polycythaemia vera (PV) is a rare, slow-growing blood cancer from a group called myeloproliferative neoplasms. It causes the bone marrow (the spongy tissue at the centre of some bones) to make too many blood cells. Up to 100 people are diagnosed with PV each year in Singapore.

Many patients with PV do not have any symptoms initially. Overtime, symptoms can develop including headaches, dizziness, fatigue and blurred vision. Without treatment PV can cause the blood to thicken and complications such as blood clots, an enlarged spleen and other blood disorders can occur.

What is ruxolitinib?

Ruxolitinib belongs to a group of medicines called Janus kinase (JAK) inhibitors which block signals from the JAK2 gene and stop the body from making too many blood cells. Doctors usually prescribe ruxolitinib for patients with PV who have tried another treatment called hydroxyurea before, but their condition has worsened, or they had side effects, so they need to try a different treatment.

Ruxolitinib is taken orally. Your doctor will tell you how much you need to take and how long you need to take it for.

Why was ruxolitinib not recommended for funding?

ACE evaluates how well a treatment works in relation to how much it costs compared to other treatments. Ruxolitinib was not recommended for funding because there are already subsidised treatments available and its benefits for patients with PV do not justify its cost. If you need ruxolitinib for PV, 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.

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Is this the right treatment for me?

There are different types of treatments available for PV. Your doctor may recommend you have ruxolitinib if other drugs are unsuitable.

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 much does the treatment cost?
- 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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 Agency for Care Effectiveness - ACE

 Agency for Care Effectiveness (ACE)

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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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