Public Health Link

From the Chief Medical Officer for Wales

Distribution:	As Appendix 1
From:	Sir Frank Atherton, Chief Medical Officer
Date:	1 June 2022
Reference:	CEM/CMO/2022/09
Category:	Immediate (Cascade within 6 hours)
Title:	Antivirals or Neutralising Monoclonal Antibodies in the Treatment of Hospital-Onset COVID-19
What is this about:	The policy has been updated, effective from 13 June 2022, to link to the published report the Independent Advisory Group commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to advise on the groups of patients likely to be at highest risk of deterioration, hospitalisation or death from a COVID infection. The report confirms the groups of 'highest' risk patients who are potentially eligible COVID treatments under this policy.
Why has it been sent:	

Dear Colleagues,

The policy has been updated, effective from 13 June 2022, to link to the published report the Independent Advisory Group commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to advise on the groups of patients likely to be at highest risk of deterioration, hospitalisation or death from a COVID infection. The report confirms the groups of 'highest' risk patients who are potentially eligible COVID treatments under this policy. Clinicians are asked to note that figure 1 of the report refers to adults (aged 18 years and over) and figure 2 refers to children (aged 12-17 years).

There are no other material changes to the policy.

In summary, available treatment options under the policy for eligible patients with hospital-onset COVID-19 are:

- First-line: nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (antiviral)
- Second-line: remdesivir (antiviral)
- Third-line: sotrovimab (nMAB)

Patients are eligible to be considered for treatment if the initial criteria below are met:

- Hospitalised for indications other than for the management of acute symptoms of COVID-19[1]

[1] This includes patients admitted to community and mental health hospitals. Where possible patients being considered for intravenous treatment should be transferred to a suitable facility for treatment delivery

AND

• SARS-CoV-2 infection is confirmed by either:

o Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing OR
o Lateral flow test

AND

• Symptomatic with COVID-19 and showing no signs of clinical recovery

AND

• The patient is a member of a 'highest' risk group (as defined in the Department of Health and Social Care commissioned Independent Advisory Group Report)

OR

COVID-19 infection presents a material risk of destabilising a pre-existing condition or illness or compromising recovery from surgery or other hospital procedure (as determined by multidisciplinary team [MDT] assessment).

Further details, including medicine specific guidance, may be found in the clinical policy. Further information on selecting the most appropriate treatment can be found in the accompanying clinical guide.

NHS trusts / health boards are asked to take the following immediate steps to support the treatment of patients in hospital with COVID-19 infection:

1. Consider prescribing an antiviral or monoclonal antibody treatment to adults, and children aged 12 and over and weighing at least 40kg2, with hospital-onset COVID infection in line with the published policy

In the absence of a confirmed virological diagnosis, the treatment should only be used when a multidisciplinary team has a high level of confidence that the clinical and radiological features suggest that COVID-19 is the most likely diagnosis.

2. Note that nirmatrelvir/ritonavir is **not recommended during pregnancy**. The use of ritonavir may reduce the efficacy of combined hormonal contraceptives. Patients using combined hormonal contraceptives should be advised to use an effective alternative contraceptive method or an additional barrier method of contraception during treatment and until after one complete menstrual cycle after stopping nirmatrelvir/ritonavir.

3. Ensure that any patients who receive a COVID antiviral while pregnant are reported to the UK COVID-19 antivirals in pregnancy registry on 0344 892 0909 (available 9:00am to 5:00pm, Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays) so that they can be followed up. For more information, go to https://www.medicinesinpregnancy.org/COVID-19-Antivirals-Pregnancy-Registry/.

4. Noting the important role of surveillance, treating clinicians are asked to support testing and / or data requirements as recommended under country specific or UK wide surveillance programmes, where laboratory capacity and resourcing allows. Sequencing

is an important part of surveillance activities to monitor for the development of new variants and drug resistance. Genotype results do not form part of the eligibility criteria for any treatment under this policy and treatment should not be delayed pending these results.

5. Discharge letters to primary care should explicitly record the treatment that has been given, together with the dose and date of administration.

6. Any organisation prescribing remdesivir to children aged 12-17 years and not on supplementary oxygen, as an off-label product, will be required to assure itself that the necessary internal governance arrangements have been completed before the medicine is prescribed. These arrangements may be through the health board / trust drugs and therapeutics committee, or equivalent.

7. Adhere to the guidance which has been developed by the Specialist Pharmacy Service (SPS) to support the administration of antivirals and monoclonal antibodies.

8.

9. Regular stock updates should be provided to the national procurement lead pharmacist. Hospitals should enter the product onto stock control and prescribing systems as described below:

- Paxlovid - nirmatrelvir (150mg tablets) and ritonavir (100mg tablets), 30 tablet pack
- Remdesivir 100mg powder for concentrate for solution for infusioSotrovimab 500mg/8ml solution for infusion vials
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10. Hospital pharmacies should continue to appropriately store unused stocks of the casirivimab and imdevimab (Ronapreve) combination monoclonal antibody; further guidance will be provided.

Product Details

Nirmatrelvir plus ritonavir (Paxlovid) is a combination oral antiviral supplied by Pfizer that works by inhibiting a protease required for viral replication. It is supplied as a pack providing a five-day treatment course containing both nirmatrelvir (150mg tablets) and ritonavir (100mg tablets). Nirmatrelvir plus ritonavir has a conditional market authorisation in Great Britain (under the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Authority (MHRA)), and a section 174 approval covers use in Northern Ireland, for the treatment of COVID-19 in adults who do not require supplemental oxygen and who are at increased risk for progression to severe COVID-19.

Remdesivir (Veklury) is supplied by Gilead. Delivered intravenously, it has a conditional market authorisation for use as a treatment for COVID-19 in both Great Britain (under the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Authority (MHRA)) and in Northern Ireland (under the European Medicines Agency (EMA)) for 1) adults, and adolescents aged 12 and up to less than 18 years and weighing at least 40kg, with pneumonia requiring supplemental oxygen and 2) for adults who do not require supplemental oxygen and who are at increased risk of progressing to severe COVID-19.

Sotrovimab (Xevudy) is supplied by GlaxoSmithKline and Vir Biotechnology. Delivered intravenously, sotrovimab has a conditional marketing authorisation in Great Britain (England,

Scotland and Wales) and in Europe (under the European Medicines Agency) for the treatment of symptomatic adults and adolescents (aged 12 years and over and weighing at least 40 kg) with acute COVID-19 infection who do not require oxygen supplementation and who are at increased risk of progressing to severe COVID-19 infection. Access to sotrovimab in Northern Ireland is through a Regulation 174 approval or the licensing determination made by the European Medicines Agency.

Off Label Use of the Antiviral Remdesivir

The use of remdesivir for COVID-19 in adolescents aged 12-17 years not yet requiring supplemental oxygen is off-label. As such, clinicians prescribing either treatment should follow trust / hospital governance procedures in relation to the prescribing of off-label medicines. Further guidance on the prescribing of off-label medicines can be found below:

- https://www.gov.uk/drug-safety-update/off-label-or-unlicensed-use-of-medicines-prescribers-responsibilities

- https://www.gmc-uk.org/ethical-guidance/ethical-guidance-for-doctors/good-practice-in-prescribing-and-managing-medicines-and-devices/prescribing-unlicensed-medicines

- https://www.rpharms.com/Portals/0/RPS%20document%20library/Open%20access/Professional%20standards/Prescribing%20competency%20framework/prescribing-competency-framework.pdf

Co-Administration

There is no interaction expected of the treatments covered under the policy with other treatments available for COVID under published UK clinical access policies - dexamethasone or hydrocortisone, remdesivir, or tocilizumab or sarilumab.
For further information please visit the University of Liverpool COVID-19 Drug Interactions website (https://www.covid19-druginteractions.org/checker).

Monoclonal antibodies and / or antivirals should not be infused concomitantly in the same IV line with other medications.

Monitoring, tracking and follow-up

All handovers of clinical care (including between hospitals if patients are transferred, between levels of care and clinical teams within hospitals, and between hospitals and primary care) should explicitly record that an antiviral or monoclonal antibody has been given together with the dose and date of administration.
Healthcare professionals are asked to report any suspected adverse reactions via the United Kingdom Yellow Card Scheme www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard or search for MHRA Yellow Card in the Google Play or Apple App Store.

Enquiries

Enquiries should in the first instance be directed to the health board's Chief Pharmacist who will escalate issues to the Pharmacy and Prescribing Team at Welsh Government if required. Enquiries to the Welsh Government should be directed to: COVID-19.Pharmacy.Prescribing@gov.wales.

Yours sincerely

SIR FRANK ATHERTON

Appendix 1

NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership to forward to:

All General Practitioners - please ensure this message is seen by all practice nurses and non-principals working in your practice and retain a copy in your 'locum information pack'.
All Community Pharmacists
Deputising services
Independent/Private clinics and Hospitals and Hospices throughout Wales

To: Health Boards and NHS Trusts:

Chief Executives
Medical Directors
Nurse Directors
Directors of Public Health Hospital
Principals and Chief Pharmacists
Onward distribution to:
Immunisation Leads,
Infectious Disease Departments
Acute medical units
Microbiologists

To: Public Health Wales:
Chief Executive
Director of Public Health Services
Consultants in Communicable Disease Control
Microbiologists
Consultant Epidemiologists
Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme

Cc:
NHS Direct Wales
British Medical Association
Royal College of GPs
Royal College of Nursing
Royal College of Midwives
Royal Pharmaceutical Society
Community Pharmacy Wales
Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health Wales

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