

Plain English Summary

Ruxolitinib for treating graft-versus-host disease

What does the guidance say?

Ruxolitinib is recommended for listing on the Medication Assistance Fund (MAF) for government subsidy for patients with acute graft-versus-host disease who meet certain clinical criteria.

Ruxolitinib is not recommended for subsidy for patients with moderate to severe chronic graft-versus-host disease which has not improved with previous treatment.

What is graft-versus-host disease?

Graft-versus-host-disease (GVHD) is a complication that can happen after receiving a stem cell or bone marrow transplant using donor cells. It occurs when the donated cells (the graft) see the recipient's cells (host) as a foreign threat and attack them.

There are two main types of GVHD:

- **Acute GVHD** usually occurs within the first 100 days after a transplant. It mainly affects the skin, digestive system and liver. Symptoms can include skin rashes, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, stomach cramps and jaundice.
- **Chronic GVHD** usually occurs more than 100 days after a transplant and can affect almost any part of the body. Symptoms can also include hair loss, dry mouth, gum disease, shortness of breath, muscle pain or weakness, dry eyes, vision changes and genital pain.

Doctors grade the severity of GVHD based on the number of organs affected and the associated symptoms to determine which treatment is suitable. Acute GVHD is graded from 0 to IV (zero to four), where a lower grade indicates a milder condition, and a higher grade is more severe. In contrast, chronic GVHD is graded as mild, moderate or severe.

What is ruxolitinib?

Ruxolitinib belongs to a group of medicines called Janus kinase (JAK) inhibitors. It stops certain proteins involved in the immune response and relieves symptoms. It is taken orally. Your doctor will tell you how much you need to take and how long you need to take it for.

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Who can have ruxolitinib?

Patients can have ruxolitinib if they have grades II to IV (two to four) acute GVHD that has not improved after taking corticosteroids (drugs that calm the body's immune system). Your doctor can advise if ruxolitinib is a suitable treatment for you.

Why was ruxolitinib recommended for subsidy?

ACE evaluates how well a treatment works in relation to how much it costs compared to other treatments. Ruxolitinib was recommended for subsidy because its benefit in treating certain patients with acute GVHD justifies its cost.

Ruxolitinib was not recommended for subsidy for treating moderate to severe chronic GVHD that has not improved with corticosteroids because its benefits for this condition do not justify its cost compared with alternative treatment options. If you need ruxolitinib for moderate to severe chronic GVHD, 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 the MAF mean for me?

The MAF helps people pay for treatments that are clinically effective and cost effective. If your doctor prescribes ruxolitinib for you, and you meet the MAF criteria, your treatment cost will be subsidised by 40% to 75%.

Published: 4 June 2024

 Agency for Care Effectiveness - ACE

 Agency for Care Effectiveness (ACE)

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