ANTITNFα THERAPY IN ADULT CROHN’S DISEASE:
New guidelines

Crohn’s disease is a chronic inflammatory bowel disorder of unknown aetiology which can affect any part of the gastrointestinal tract and is characterised by relapses and remissions. There is an increasing incidence of early onset Crohn’s disease, which has major implications for long-term care. It is incurable and a combination of medical and surgical therapies is often required. Dr Daniel Gaya, Consultant Gastroenterologist at Glasgow Royal Infirmary and lead author on the recently approved GGCHB guideline, highlights some of the key issues and controversial areas to be considered by those looking after patients on these potent and expensive medications. A more detailed article including references is available on our website.

There are two biological drugs licensed for the treatment of Crohn’s disease, infliximab and adalimumab, which both block the proinflammatory cytokine, tumour necrosis factor alpha (TNFα). Infliximab is a part human, part murine monoclonal antibody. Adalimumab is a recombinant fully human monoclonal antibody which antagonises TNFα. NICE has published its multi-technology appraisal (187) on the maintenance use of both these drugs in Crohn’s disease. These recommendations were adopted by NHS QIS and supersede previous SMC advice.

Indications and follow up
Biologic therapy is generally not considered until an adequate trial of conventional immunosuppression has been ineffective, not tolerated or contra-indicated (the conventional ‘step up’ approach). Prescribing should ideally follow discussion in a multi-disciplinary team environment which includes gastroenterology, colorectal surgery, pathology, radiology, nursing and pharmacy input. Prescribers must ensure appropriate time and information is given to counsel patients of the risk benefit ratio of these medications.

Patients should have their disease reassessed at least annually by way of clinical examination, faecal markers, imaging and endoscopy/colonoscopy as appropriate to ensure that there is a continued indication for anti-TNF prescription.

Adverse effects, consent and counselling
GPs do not have any specific monitoring responsibilities for anti-TNF therapy for Crohn’s Disease patients. They should be familiar with the potential adverse effects and the information provided to patients by their gastroenterology physician. If the patient develops an infection while on anti-TNFs, the secondary care team should be informed and the patient should be asked to stop taking any treatment (which, if adalimumab, could be self-administered). Other potential complications of therapy should be discussed with the secondary care team.

Before commencing anti-TNF therapy, patients should be given a verbal and written explanation by the hospital team of the following potential issues and side-effects.

**Infection and screening**
Anti-TNF treatment can reactivate latent tuberculosis (TB) infection. The combination of corticosteroids and immunomodulators or anti-TNF increases the risk of opportunistic infection fifteenfold compared to threefold with these drugs in isolation.

Before commencing therapy, current or previous TB should be actively excluded by a detailed patient and family history, clinical examination and chest X-ray. Those with latent TB or at high risk of recurrence should receive isoniazid chemoprophylaxis under the supervision of a respiratory physician. Active TB should be adequately treated under the supervision of a respiratory physician before starting anti-TNF therapy.

**Malignancy**
This is rarely associated with anti-TNF therapy. Leukaemias, lymphomas and solid organ tumours have all been described.

**Demyelination**
Both anti-TNF therapies have rarely been associated with the new onset of central demyelination.

**Contra-indications**
- active sepsis
- active cancer
- pregnancy/breastfeeding (including six months after stopping therapy)
- demyelinating disorder
- moderate to severe congestive cardiac failure
- active or latent tuberculosis (see below)
- clinically significant hepatic or renal impairment
- hypersensitivity to infliximab/adalimumab, to other murine proteins or to any of the excipients
- stricturing with evidence of mechanical hold-up (relative)
- hepatitis B, hepatitis C (relative)

**Website**
http://www.ggcformulary.scot.nhs.uk
## Latest ADTC decisions

For full details of all ADTC decisions and links to SMC recommendations go to: [www.ggcformulary.scot.nhs.uk/Latest%20news/formulary%20update%20bulletin.pdf](http://www.ggcformulary.scot.nhs.uk/Latest%20news/formulary%20update%20bulletin.pdf)

### MAJOR changes to the Formulary

- **Certolizumab Pegol (Cimzia®)** Moderate to severe active rheumatoid arthritis in adults. Total Formulary. Restricted to specialists in rheumatology.
- **Elsocarbazine acetate (Zebinix®)** Adjunctive therapy in adults with partial-onset seizures with or without secondary generalisation. Total Formulary. Restricted to specialists in epilepsy.
- **Plerixafor injection (Mozobil®)** In combination with G-CSF, to enhance mobilisation of haematopoietic stem cells to the peripheral blood for collection and subsequent autologous transplantation in patients with lymphoma and multiple myeloma whose cells mobilise poorly. Total Formulary. Restricted to use in accordance with regional protocol.

### NON-Formulary

- **Amifenampridine (Firdapse®)** Treatment of Lambert-Easton Myasthenic Syndrome in adults.
- **Canakinumab (Ilaris®)** Cryopyrin-Associated Periodic Syndromes.
- **Denosumab (Prolia®)** Bone loss associated with hormone ablation in men with prostate cancer at increased risk of fractures.
- **Dexamethasone Intravitreal implant (Ozurdex®)** Treatment of macular oedema following either branch retinal vein occlusion or central retinal vein occlusion.
- **Diclofenac (Mobigel Spray®)** For the local symptomatic relief of mild to moderate pain and inflammation following acute blunt trauma of small and medium-sized joints and periarticular structures.
- **Docetaxel (Taxotere®)** Adjuvant treatment of patients with operable node-negative breast cancer.
- **Eculizumab (Soliris®)** Treatment of patients with paroxysmal nocturnal haemoglobinuria (PNH).
- **Fondaparinux (Arixtra®)** Treatment of acute symptomatic spontaneous superficial-vein thrombosis of the lower limbs without concomitant deep-vein thrombosis.
- **Gefitinib (Iressa®)** Treatment of adult patients with locally advanced or metastatic non small cell lung cancer with activating mutations of epidermal growth factor receptor tyrosine kinase.
- **Glucosamine (Glusartel®)** Relief of symptoms in mild to moderate osteoarthritis of the knee.
- **Prucalopride (Resolor®)** Symptomatic treatment of chronic constipation in women in whom laxatives fail to provide adequate relief.
- **Ranolazine (Ranexa®)** Add-on therapy for the symptomatic treatment of stable angina pectoris.
- **Sevelamer carbonate (Renvela®)** Control of hyperphosphataemia in adult patients receiving haemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis.
- **Trabectedin (Yondelis®)** Treatment of patients with advanced soft tissue sarcoma, after failure of anthracyclines and ifosfamide, or who are unsuited to receive these agents.

### Added with MINOR changes to the Formulary

- **Adalimumab (Humira®)** Severe active Crohn’s disease. Total Formulary. Restricted to use in accordance with local protocol.
- **Bortezomib (Velcade®)** Progressive multiple myeloma who have received at least one prior therapy and who have already undergone, or are unsuitable for, bone marrow transplantation. Total Formulary. Restricted to use in accordance with regional protocol.
- **Calcichew D3 500mg/400iu Caplet®** Calcium and vitamin D3 supplementation. Total Formulary. Restricted to patients who cannot tolerate chewable tablet formulations.
- **Etonogestrel implant (Nexplanon®)** Contraception. Preferred List.
- **Infliximab (Remicade®)** Severe active or active fistulising Crohn’s disease. Total Formulary. Restricted to use in accordance with local protocol.
- **Lidoine 4% cream (LMX4®)** Local topical anaesthesia prior to venepuncture. Total Formulary. Restricted to hospital use.
- **Moxifloxacin IV (Avelox®)** Community acquired pneumonia. Total Formulary. Restricted to use only on the advice of microbiologists or specialists in infectious diseases.
- **Oxycodone 50mg/ml injection (OxyNorm®)** Moderate to severe pain in patients with cancer. Total Formulary. Restricted to use in the community and hospice setting, where oxycodone is appropriate choice.
- **Pemetrexed (Alimta®)** First line treatment, in combination with cisplatin, of patients with locally advanced or metastatic non-small cell lung cancer other than predominantly squamous cell histology. Total Formulary. Restricted to use in accordance with regional protocol.
- **Sunitinib (Sutent®)** Treatment of unresectable and/or metastatic malignant gastrointestinal stromal tumour after failure of imatinib mesilate treatment due to resistance or intolerance. Total Formulary. Restricted to use in accordance with regional protocol.
- **Tacrolimus granules for oral suspension (Modigraf®)** - Prophylaxis of transplant rejection in adult and paediatric, kidney, liver or heart allograft recipients. Treatment of allograft rejection resistant to treatment with other immunosuppressive medicinal products in adult and paediatric patients. Total Formulary. Restricted to patients who are unable to swallow capsules or who require small changes in dosing increments.

*S specialist use only  ‚S specialist initiation only*
Both infliximab and adalimumab are included in the fortnightly subcutaneous injection.

Infusion on an eight-weekly basis while adalimumab is a efficacy. Infliximab is administered as an intravenous adalimumab, and they appear to have broadly equivalent there are no head-to-head trials of infliximab and choice of therapy choice of therapy to receive pneumococcal and annual influenza vaccination.

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Vaccination vaccination

Live vaccines are not recommended during anti-TNF therapy. Inactivated vaccines are safe and patients are encouraged to receive pneumococcal and annual influenza vaccination.

Choice of therapy choice of therapy

There are no head-to-head trials of infliximab and adalimumab, and they appear to have broadly equivalent efficacy. Infliximab is administered as an intravenous infusion on an eight-weekly basis while adalimumab is a fortnightly subcutaneous injection.

Both infliximab and adalimumab are included in the guideline. Infliximab is the biological choice for fistulising disease on the basis of current evidence. Otherwise, the choice of medication depends on the clinician’s view, patient preference, service capacity and cost.

Initially infliximab was administered as episodic treatment. However, in view of the higher relapse rates, lower efficacy and increased immunogenicity associated with episodic infliximab treatment, maintenance therapy is now the standard of care for infliximab. Adalimumab therapy has only been studied as maintenance therapy.

Treatment cessation treatment cessation

Crohn’s disease has a high risk of relapse on cessation of immunosuppressive therapy or biological medications. The risk-benefit ratio should be discussed with patients and duration of treatment should be individualised. At least one third of patients will suffer a clinical relapse on withdrawal of infliximab within one year. There appears to be no deleterious effect on response rates on restarting this medication.

If cessation of biological therapy is being considered, a thorough assessment should be undertaken to exclude any ongoing disease activity by way of clinical examination, faecal markers, colonoscopy and MRI scanning as appropriate.
“If I could change one thing . . .”

Dr Neil Smart, Consultant Anaesthetist, tells us that he would change people’s view that higher cost is linked to higher quality and how small changes in practice are already leading to significant reductions in waste.

My granny lived her life by maxim; “You get what you pay for”, “Cheap and nasty” and “Quality is remembered long after the price is forgotten” were among her favourites. It undoubtedly served her well - she lived to a magnificent 96 - although I always thought “One tequila, two tequila, three tequila, floor” was of more practical use. But if I could change one thing, it would be her view on the relationship between cost and quality.

For high cost does not automatically equate to high quality. Equally, quality can be maintained as costs are reduced, within reason. This is particularly important in healthcare in the current financial climate where NHS Boards can expect to receive diminishing uplifts from Government. Reducing costs without compromising quality, or more importantly safety, may appear counter-intuitive but several recent initiatives in stock, equipment and materials management suggest otherwise.

Standardisation is a familiar theme in the Scottish Patient Safety Programme. Early work looking at laparoscopic equipment identified considerable variation across NHSGGC. For example, in Nissen fundoplication, one surgeon used £250 of equipment per case while at the other end of the cost spectrum another used alternative products costing almost four times as much. There were no demonstrable differences in clinical outcome between surgeons attributable to the kit used. This observation stimulated a review of equipment preferences by the general surgical users themselves and resulted in standardisation of much of the kit. Choice was preserved for products where strong clinical preferences were identified. Significant cost savings result. Similarly in orthopaedics, clinician choice in hip and knee prostheses has also been maintained, in this instance by local contract initiatives pursued through procurement.

Bulk buying saves money. Many stock contracts are now made nationally, bringing savings from economies of scale. All such products must pass through a process where they are scored by clinicians and procurement personnel using a balanced scorecard. Attributes are weighted and then scored. Weighting changes from product to product and quality. Where saving has resulted, local contract initiatives have been pursued.

Correction: PostScript 60

In the ‘Diabetes Update’ article there was a typographical error. Metformin can be prescribed in patients with a reduced kidney function, if stable, down to an eGFR of 30ml/min/1.73m².

New lipid lowering guidelines: Additional guidance for GPs on existing patients prescribed atorvastatin 80mg daily for Acute Coronary Syndrome (ACS)

The new NHSGG guideline (www.staffnet.ggc.scot.nhs.uk/Clinical%20info/Documents/002_2010_Cholesterol%20guidelines.pdf) for the management of cholesterol no longer includes first line treatment with atorvastatin 80mg daily for patients diagnosed with acute coronary syndrome (ACS). Patients with newly-diagnosed ACS should receive simvastatin 40mg daily and be treated in line with the guideline for the secondary prevention of coronary heart disease (CHD) and stroke. High dose atorvastatin may be used where lower doses of statin have failed to control cholesterol levels.

In primary care, patients prescribed atorvastatin 80mg daily for ACS may be switched to simvastatin 40mg daily.

Before switching:
• ensure the indication for prescribing atorvastatin 80mg daily is ACS and not to achieve target cholesterol levels,
• check cholesterol levels. It may not be appropriate to switch patients who have a high cholesterol level on atorvastatin 80mg. Other aspects of care, such as treatment concordance, may need to be considered.

PostScript

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