



North East Treatment Advisory Group

October 2011

Dear Patient

The NHS North East Treatment Advisory Group (NETAG) is a group of clinicians and managers working in the NHS across the North East. The group meets several times a year to consider reviews of new treatments and make recommendations for their use in the region.

In July 2011 the group considered evidence for the use of a drug called bevacizumab (brand name 'Avastin[®]') for the treatment of age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

Currently we use a similar drug called ranibizumab (brand name 'Lucentis[®]') for this condition. Lucentis[®] works very well and has been recommended by the National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE). Because Lucentis[®] and Avastin[®] work in the same way many doctors have used Avastin[®] to treat AMD and other eye diseases. The group looked at new evidence on the use of Avastin[®] for AMD and was satisfied that it works just as well and is as safe as Lucentis[®]. For this reason the group has now recommended that Avastin[®] can be used for treating AMD and many treatment centres are switching to it as it is much less costly than Lucentis[®]. Therefore a lot of money can be saved and spent on other treatments for our patients.



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Avastin[®] is not licensed for use in the eye, indeed it has been mainly investigated for use as a cancer treatment although it has been widely used for AMD for many years. This means that if you receive Avastin[®] for AMD your doctor will be using an unlicensed medicine. This is not unusual in the UK as many of the medicines used by NHS doctors aren't licensed for the way in which they are used. If you have any concerns about receiving an unlicensed medicine your doctor will be able to discuss your concerns with you.

If you would like to know more about the use of Avastin[®] for AMD you can obtain the full NETAG appraisal report on the internet at the following website: www.netag.nhs.uk (large text version available on request).

We wish you all the best with your treatment,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'William Horsley'.

William Horsley

Secretary to, and on behalf of,
the NHS North East Treatment Advisory Group