

Anastrozole/Letrozole Shared Care Protocol

Introduction

Advanced breast cancer is an incurable disease with a poor prognosis. Tamoxifen is used first line but tumours can become tamoxifen-resistant, and in women with oestrogen receptor positive tumours, second line treatment is surgery, chemotherapy or medical treatment with aromatase inhibitors e.g. Anastrozole, Letrozole or progestogen treatment. All show a similar efficacy in controlled trials, although long-term follow up suggests a significant survival advantage with aromatase inhibitors.

Therapeutic Use

Anastrozole is licensed in the UK for treatment of advanced breast cancer in post-menopausal women whose disease has progressed following treatment with Tamoxifen or other anti-oestrogens. Letrozole is licensed for treatment of advanced breast cancer in whom Tamoxifen or other anti-oestrogen therapy has failed.

Efficacy has not been demonstrated in oestrogen receptor negative patients unless they had a previous positive clinical response to Tamoxifen.

Criteria for patient selection for Anastrozole/Letrozole therapy

Aromatase inhibitor therapy is normally used for second-line treatment in women with oestrogen receptor positive tumours where the disease has progressed on Tamoxifen therapy, or for women who have recurrent breast cancer having previously had Tamoxifen adjuvant treatment. There are occasions when aromatase inhibitor therapy is used as first-line treatment in patients who have developed a second cancer when the first was treated with tamoxifen.

Dosage and Administration

The dose of Anastrozole is 1mg per day and the dose of Letrozole is 2.5mg daily, with no alterations needed for mild renal or hepatic disease.

Side-effects

Adverse effects include hot flushes, headaches, vaginal dryness, vaginal bleeding, hair thinning and gastro-intestinal upset. Somnolence, rash, hepatic changes and slight increases in total cholesterol have also been reported, although the company state regular monitoring is not required.

Drug Interactions

Oestrogen containing therapies should not be co-administered with Anastrozole or Letrozole as they would negate its pharmacological action.

No other clinically significant interactions have been reported with cimetidine or other cytochrome P450 mediated drugs.

Cost

At current prices, 1 year's treatment with Anastrozole 1mg daily and Letrozole 2.5mg daily costs £1,084.

References

MTRAC Guidelines VS99/07 and SS99/07

Buzdar, AU, Jonat, W, Howell, A, Jones SE, Blomqvist, CP et al. Anastrozole versus Megestrol Acetate in the treatment of post-menopausal women with advanced breast carcinoma. *Cancer* 1998;83:1142-1152.

British National Formulary No. 37 March 1999 Section 8.3.4.1

Data Sheet Compendium 1998-1999

Astra/Zeneca Shared Care Guidelines

Aspects of Care for which the Hospital is Responsible

- Initiation of the drug by the specialist
- Advice on when to stop therapy
- Providing information to the patient of benefits and side-effects of treatment
- Reporting adverse effects to the CSM
- Communicating with GP with regards to changes in treatment and assessment of adverse events

Aspects of Care for which the GP is responsible

- Prescribing of Anastrozole/Letrozole
- Reporting adverse events to the Consultant and CSM
- Reporting to and seeking advice from the Oncology team on any aspect of patient care which is of concern to the GP and may affect disease treatment

Aspects of Care for which the Patient is responsible

- Report any adverse effects to their GP whilst taking Anastrozole/Letrozole
- To ensure they have a clear understanding of their treatment

Availability of Back-up Advice and Support

Hospital Number	01922-721172
Consultants /Breast Cancer Specialist Nurse	Contact through hospital switchboard
Chemotherapy Suite	extension 7168
Drug Information/Interface Pharmacist	01922-656610

These guidelines have been written in collaboration by the Walsall Manor Hospital NHS Trust Oncology Department and Pharmacy Department.

Mr Fortes-Mayer, Consultant Surgeon
Dr Chetiyawardana, Consultant Clinical Oncologist and Radiotherapist
Dr Fernando, Consultant Clinical Oncologist and Radiotherapist
Michelle Argyle, Interface Pharmacist
Margaret Clarke, Breast Care Nurse
Dr. A Bligh, East PCG lead, Dr. N Khan, North PCG lead
Dr. A S Gill, West PCG lead, Dr. O Manocha, South PCG lead

Other Useful Contacts

For advice, information, and emotional support for women with breast cancer, their family and friends.

Walsall Breast Cancer Self-Help Group	01922-412731
Cancer BACUP	0800-181199 or 0171 6132121
Breast Cancer Support Service	01232-663281
Breast Cancer Care	0500-245345