

BSR STATEMENT ON ADALIMUMAB FOR RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

It was announced on September 10th 2003 that approval has been given from the European Commission to market adalimumab (Humira) for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis in Europe. As this drug will be available in pharmacies in the UK in the next few days, the BSR would like to issue the following statement regarding its use:

With the imminent availability of adalimumab we are faced with an increased choice of anti-TNF alpha drugs but one which has not been appraised by NICE. Correspondence from National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) suggests that:

'The Institute's guidance applies formally only to those technologies for which the evidence was available at the time the guidance is developed. Individual clinicians and NHS organisations need to form their own judgement about similar technologies (pharmaceuticals which fall into the same class are an example).'

When NICE updates its own guidance on Etanercept and Infliximab for Rheumatoid Arthritis (planned March 2005) they will take account of interventions which have become available since the original guidance on Etanercept and Infliximab for Rheumatoid Arthritis was issued.

The BSR has therefore decided that the profession should agree on appropriate guidelines for the use of this extended range of agents, to include adalimumab. As such, the Audit and Guidelines Sub-Group of the Clinical Affairs Committee are currently drawing up such guidelines for adalimumab, along with updated versions for the two existing and NICE-appraised biologics. In advance of clinical guidelines being available BSR believes the current evidence is strong enough to support the use of adalimumab for Rheumatoid Arthritis.

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Chair, BSR Clinical Affairs Committee

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