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17 December 2021

Dear Colleague,

**INFORMATION ABOUT COVID-19 TREATMENTS –
NEUTRALISING MONOCLONAL ANTIBODIES (nMAB) OR
ANTIVIRALS FOR NON-HOSPITALISED PATIENTS WITH COVID-19.**

Vaccines remain the primary defence against COVID-19, but the UK Government has announced that it has also made available other new treatment options for COVID-19 for eligible groups of patients. These new treatments are used in the earliest stages of infection and often taken at home. These treatments should be administered as soon as possible after a confirmed COVID-19 positive PCR test has been received. From 16 December 2021, the Health Service will be offering new antibody and antiviral treatments to people with COVID-19 who are at highest risk of becoming seriously ill.

Two types of COVID-19 treatment are available at this time (others may become available later):

- neutralising monoclonal antibodies (nMAB). This is usually administered as a single intravenous infusion.
- oral antiviral medicine (currently [molnupiravir](#) (Lagevrio)).

These treatments may help patients reduce the risk of becoming seriously ill.

Who can have a COVID-19 treatment?

Treatments for COVID-19 are for people aged 12 years and above for nMAB and aged 18 years and over for Molnupiravir, who have tested positive for the virus and are at highest risk of getting seriously ill.

How will eligible patients receive treatments?

1) Targeted deployment of nMAB and Antivirals

Targeted deployment is specifically for those who are in the highest risk group from COVID-19.

From the 16 December, access to nMABs as a treatment for COVID-19, will be extended to non-hospitalised patients who are PCR positive and aged 12 years and above, who are considered at highest risk of progression to severe disease, hospital admission or death. Eligible patients may receive antiviral therapy if an nMAB is contraindicated and they are aged 18 and over.

This highest risk patient cohort has been defined in Appendix 1 of the Interim Clinical Policy by the Rapid C-19 policy expert group and access for this patient group to the COVID treatments will be directly through Trust led, Outpatient COVID-19 Treatment Services (OCTs), where eligible patients will be assessed by a clinician from the OCT for their suitability for treatment. Further details on the eligible cohorts and the latest advice from the Chief Medical Officer to HSC professionals will be available on the Department of Health [HSS\(MD\) Letters and urgent communications](#) page. Work is currently ongoing to assess effectiveness of the treatments against Omicron, the clinical position will be kept under review and you will be notified of any changes as necessary.

Access to treatments is at this time is through the OCTs. Prescription for nMAB or antiviral treatment for his ultra-high risk cohort **will not** be made through primary care nor private prescription.

2) Panoramic Clinical Trial

You may be aware of a recent announcement by the UK Government about the use of new antiviral treatments across the four UK nations within the [Panoramic Clinical Trial](#) to treat certain patient cohorts in the community with confirmed COVID-19.

This is a priority study for the UK which is supported by the four Chief Medical Officers; the support of primary care contractors in Northern Ireland is vital to ensure patients most likely to benefit from COVID-19 antivirals can gain access to them.

On the back of this announcement, you may be contacted by patients looking for further information. We would very much appreciate your help with signposting eligible patients to the trial.

PANORAMIC has been designed as a 'platform clinical trial', meaning it can rapidly evaluate several antiviral treatments over time that could help clinically vulnerable people with COVID-19 recover sooner, prevent the

need for hospital admission and so ease the burden on the Health Service. The UK Antiviral Taskforce has selected all treatments to be tested. The first treatment to be investigated through the trial will be molnupiravir (brand name, Lagevrio), a COVID antiviral already [licensed](#) by the MHRA. Antiviral treatments have been developed that have so far been tested in smaller studies in mostly unvaccinated people. This study aims to assess the effectiveness of antivirals in a now largely vaccinated population.

The Panoramic trial will offer antiviral treatments for eligible patients with confirmed COVID-19 in the UK. Trial participants will receive oral treatment at home, delivered directly from a central pharmacy commissioned as part of the clinical trial.

Who is eligible to take part in the trial?

[Panoramic](#) will prioritise those at greater risk of being severely ill if they test positive for COVID-19.

To be eligible, patients must:

- be unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 that started in the last 5 days
- have received a positive PCR test for COVID-19
- be aged 50 years and above OR 18-49 years old with an underlying medical condition that can increase chance of having severe COVID-19
- live anywhere across all four UK nations

The health conditions that make people eligible for the national study include:

- Chronic respiratory disease (including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), cystic fibrosis and asthma requiring at least daily use of preventative and/or reliever medication)
- Chronic heart or vascular disease
- Chronic kidney disease
- Chronic liver disease
- Chronic neurological disease (including dementia, stroke, epilepsy)
- Severe and profound learning disability
- Down's syndrome
- Diabetes mellitus
- Immunosuppression: primary (e.g., inherited immune disorders resulting from genetic mutations, usually present at birth and diagnosed in childhood) or secondary due to disease or treatment (e.g. sickle cell, HIV, cancer, chemotherapy)
- Solid organ, bone marrow, or stem cell transplant recipients
- Morbid obesity (BMI >35)
- Severe mental illness

- Care home resident
- Considered by recruiting clinician to be clinically vulnerable.

How can patients take part in Panoramic?

Patients who meet the criteria can sign up themselves through this website - www.panoramictrial.org

Informed, consented patients will be randomised to one of two arms:

1. usual care or
2. usual care and to be in receipt of a new antiviral treatment to take twice daily for 5 days.

All participants will be required to complete a daily diary for 28 days through the [PANORAMIC](http://www.panoramictrial.org) website or receive a phone call on days 7, 14, and 28 to speak about their symptoms. This data will help the NHS to develop plans on how to best make molnupiravir available in the future to patients who would benefit most from this treatment.

GP Practice Involvement

If you would like to speak to a member of the trial team, please Freephone: 0808 156 0017, Email address: panoramic@phc.ox.ac.uk.

Information for GP Practices interested in getting involved in recruiting participants to the study will be shared in due course through the Primary Care group of the [Northern Ireland Clinical Research Network](http://www.nicr.ac.uk).

It is important to note that antivirals will not be available to prescribe in primary care either via NHS nor privately outside the clinical trial.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Margaret O'Brien
Head of General Medical Services