

Understanding NICE guidance

Information for people who use NHS services

Dronedarone for non-permanent atrial fibrillation

NICE 'technology appraisal guidance' advises on when and how drugs and other treatments should be used in the NHS.

This leaflet is about when **dronedarone** should be used to treat people with non-permanent atrial fibrillation in the NHS in England and Wales. It explains guidance (advice) from NICE (the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence). It is written for people with non-permanent atrial fibrillation but it may also be useful for their families or carers or for anyone with an interest in the condition.

It does not describe non-permanent atrial fibrillation or the treatments in detail – a member of your healthcare team should discuss these with you. You can get more information from the organisations listed on the back page.



This may not be the only possible treatment for non-permanent atrial fibrillation. Your healthcare team should talk to you about whether it is suitable for you and about other treatment options available.

What has NICE said?

NICE recommends dronedarone as a possible treatment for some people with non-permanent atrial fibrillation (see below).

Who can have dronedarone?

You should be able to have dronedarone if:

- you have already tried another type of drug (usually a drug called a beta-blocker) but this has not worked, **and**
- you have at least one of the following which means you are at a higher risk of developing disease of the heart or blood vessels:
 - you are taking at least two different types of drugs for high blood pressure
 - you have diabetes
 - you have had a type of stroke or a blood clot in the past
 - the left chamber of your heart is larger than normal
 - your heart is pumping less blood around your body than normal, **or**
 - you are 70 or over, **and**
- you do not have a severe form of heart failure; that is, if you have been diagnosed as having heart failure, you are still able to carry out everyday tasks with either no symptoms, or symptoms that are mild (for example, you may experience mild chest pain or shortness of breath when walking or climbing the stairs).

Why has NICE said this?

NICE looks at how well treatments work, and also at how well they work in relation to how much they cost the NHS. NICE recommended dronedarone in these circumstances because, although it was not clear from the evidence whether it works as well as other treatments that are available on the NHS, it has less side effects. Therefore, when the circumstances above are met, its cost is justified by the benefits it provides.

Non-permanent atrial fibrillation

Atrial fibrillation is a condition that affects the heart, causing an irregular pulse and the heart to beat irregularly and too fast. When this happens, the heart cannot efficiently pump blood around the body. This may cause symptoms such as palpitations, chest pain or discomfort, shortness of breath, dizziness and fainting. Severe symptoms can be life-threatening and require immediate treatment. However, many people with atrial fibrillation have no or only mild symptoms.

There are different types of atrial fibrillation. 'Non-permanent' means that the atrial fibrillation may come and go – it may stop without treatment (this is called 'paroxysmal atrial fibrillation'), or it may need treatment to help the heartbeat return to normal (this is called 'persistent atrial fibrillation'). 'Permanent' means that the atrial fibrillation is ongoing and will not stop with or without treatment – it is more longstanding, usually lasting longer than 1 year.

Dronedaronone

Dronedaronone (also known as Multaq) is a type of antiarrhythmic drug that helps to control the heart rhythm.

What does this mean for me?

When NICE recommends a treatment, the NHS must make sure it is available to those people it could help, normally within 3 months of the guidance being issued.

So, if you have non-permanent atrial fibrillation, and you and your doctor think that dronedaronone is the right treatment for you (see 'What has NICE said?' on page 2), you should be able to have the treatment on the NHS. Please see www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance if you think you are eligible for the treatment but it is not available.

If you are already taking dronedaronone for non-permanent atrial fibrillation, and you don't meet the circumstances given on page 2 (see 'What has NICE said?'), you should be able to continue taking it until you and your healthcare professional decide it is the right time to stop.

More information

The organisations below can provide more information and support for people with non-permanent atrial fibrillation. NICE is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of any information or advice provided by these organisations.

- Arrhythmia Alliance, 01789 450 787
www.arrythmiaalliance.org.uk
- Atrial Fibrillation Association (AFA), 01789 451 837
www.atrialfibrillation.org.uk
- Anticoagulation Europe, 020 8289 6875
www.anticoagulationeurope.org
- Grown Up Congenital Heart Patients Association (GUCH), 0800 845759
www.guch.org.uk
- The Stroke Association, 0303 303 3100
www.stroke.org.uk

NHS Choices (www.nhs.uk) may be a good place to find out more. Your local patient advice and liaison service (usually known as 'PALS') may be able to give you more information and support. If you live in Wales you should speak to NHS Direct Wales for information on who to contact.

About NICE

NICE produces guidance (advice) for the NHS about preventing, diagnosing and treating medical conditions. The guidance is written by independent experts, including healthcare professionals and people representing patients and carers. They consider the evidence on the condition and treatments, the views of patients and carers and the experiences of doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals, and consider the costs involved. Staff working in the NHS are expected to follow this guidance.

To find out more about NICE, its work and how it reaches decisions, see www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance

This leaflet and other versions of the guidance aimed at healthcare professionals are available at www.nice.org.uk/guidance/TA197

You can order printed copies of this leaflet from NICE publications (phone 0845 003 7783 or email publications@nice.org.uk and quote reference N2275). The NICE website has a screen reader service called Browsealoud, which allows you to listen to our guidance. Click on the Browsealoud logo on the NICE website to use this service.

We encourage NHS and voluntary organisations to use text from this leaflet in their own information about non-permanent atrial fibrillation.