

Promising immunotherapy drug now available for some lung cancer patients in England

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Credit: Cancer Research UK

Some lung cancer patients in England can now be offered a potentially life-extending immunotherapy drug.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has said

that nivolumab (Opdivo) should be made available to certain [lung cancer patients](#) in England through the Cancer Drugs Fund (CDF).

Rose Gray, Cancer Research UK's senior policy adviser, welcomed the decision to provide the promising drug, which is a kind of immunotherapy.

NICE had previously said there was not enough evidence that nivolumab worked and that it was too expensive for routine use.

But in the [recommendation](#) NICE has approved the drug through the CDF, which aims to provide [patients](#) with faster access to new treatments before they're fully approved for NHS use.

NICE asked the manufacturer Bristol-Myers Squibb to provide a discount while the [drug](#) is going through [clinical trials](#).

It will now be available to around 1,300 lung [cancer](#) patients with advanced non-small cell lung cancer, who have already been treated with chemotherapy.

Professor Carole Longson, director of the NICE centre for health technology evaluation, said: "We know that nivolumab is clinically effective for some people with lung cancer but the full extent of its benefit is not clear."

Longson said the agreement means patients can have access to the promising treatment whilst further evidence is gathered on its value.

Gray said that these changes mean patients can now access innovative drugs like Nivolumab earlier and that "NICE can base its final decision on real-world evidence from the NHS in addition to information from clinical trials."

Nivolumab works by stimulating the body's immune system to recognise and fight cancer cells. It blocks a molecule on a kind of immune cell that [cancer cells](#) target to evade detection.

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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