

Plain English Summary

Toripalimab for treating recurrent or metastatic nasopharyngeal carcinoma

What does the guidance say?

Toripalimab in combination with chemotherapy is not recommended for government subsidy for patients with recurrent or metastatic nasopharyngeal carcinoma (NPC). It can be claimed under MediShield Life, and the claim limits are available [here](#).

What is nasopharyngeal carcinoma?

Nasopharyngeal carcinoma (NPC), also known as nose cancer, occurs when the cells in the nasopharynx (the area behind the nose and just above the throat) grow uncontrollably. Approximately 270 people are diagnosed with NPC in Singapore each year.

Symptoms of NPC include a painless lump in the neck, ringing in the ears, hearing loss, nosebleeds and blocked nose. If the cancer spreads to other parts of the body, this is known as advanced or metastatic disease. If the cancer comes back after treatment, this is known as recurrent cancer.

What is toripalimab?

Toripalimab belongs to a group of medicines called PD-1/PD-L1 checkpoint inhibitors. It is a type of cancer treatment called immunotherapy that helps the immune system find and destroy cancer cells. It is given as a slow drip into a vein (intravenously) in combination with chemotherapy for patients with recurrent or metastatic NPC.

Why was it not recommended for subsidy?

ACE evaluates how well a treatment works in relation to how much it costs compared to other treatments. Toripalimab was not recommended for government subsidy because its benefits for treating patients with recurrent or metastatic NPC do not justify its cost. If you need toripalimab for this condition, you can speak to a medical social worker to find out if there is financial assistance available to help with the cost of treatment.

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Is this the right treatment for me?

There are different types of treatments available for NPC. Your doctor may recommend toripalimab if they consider it is the most suitable treatment for you. They should give you clear information, listen to your views and concerns, and talk to you about your treatment options. Some of the questions you may want to ask your doctor when making decisions about your care are:

- How will the treatment affect my day-to-day activities?
- How well does it work compared to other treatments?
- What are the side effects and risks of treatment, and how likely are they?
- How much does the treatment cost, and who can I approach if I want to find out whether there is financial assistance available to help with the cost of treatment?
- How long will I need to be on the treatment for?
- What happens if the treatment stops working?
- What happens if I do not want to have treatment?

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