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SUMMARY OF COHERE FINLAND RECOMMENDATION PEMBROLIZUMAB IN COMBINATION WITH CYTOSTATIC TREATMENT IN FIRST-LINE TREATMENT OF OESOPHAGEAL CANCER OR GASTRO-OESOPHAGEAL JUNCTION ADENOCARCINOMA

The Council for Choices in Health Care in Finland (COHERE Finland) adopted the recommendation at its meeting on 22 March 2022.

Under the recommendation, pembrolizumab in combination with cytostatic treatment is part of the service choices for the first-line treatment of oesophageal cancer or gastro-oesophageal junction adenocarcinoma. The requirement is that the marketing authorisation holder and the buyer agree on a price significantly lower than the public wholesale price. Treatment should be allocated to patients whose performance status is good (ECOG 0 or 1).

Pembrolizumab is intended as first-line treatment in combination with cytostatic treatment for adults with locally advanced and unresectable or metastatic oesophageal cancer, or HER-2-negative gastro-oesophageal junction adenocarcinoma when the tumour cells express PD-L1-ligand.

The research evidence is based on a randomised, double-blind, phase III KEYNOTE-590 study, which compared the effectiveness of a combination therapy of pembrolizumab plus fluorouracil and cisplatin to a combination therapy of placebo plus fluorouracil and cisplatin in adult patients with good performance status. According to the findings, adding pembrolizumab to the combination of fluorouracil and cisplatin prolonged the total survival median by about four months in patients with locally advanced, unresectable or metastatic oesophageal cancer, or HER-2-negative gastro-oesophageal junction adenocarcinoma whose tumour had positive staining for PD-L1-ligand (CPS \geq 10). Adding pembrolizumab to the

therapy also postponed the progression of the disease by nearly two months. It must be noted that the patients who took part in the study differed in many respects from typical Finnish oesophageal cancer or gastro-oesophageal junction adenocarcinoma patients. According to the findings, treatment should be focused on patients with a good performance status.

Calculated at list prices, the patient-specific medicine and dosage costs for pembrolizumab combination therapy amount to approximately EUR 90,000 for a treatment period of 7.7 months. The estimated annual number of patients suitable for the treatment is 44.

Locally advanced or metastatic oesophageal cancer or gastro-oesophageal junction adenocarcinoma is a serious disease that significantly reduces the quality of life and has a poor prognosis. There is no curative treatment for the disease. A total of 368 new cases of oesophageal cancer and 603 new cases of gastric cancer were diagnosed in Finland in 2019. The number of gastro-oesophageal junction cancer cases in Finland is approximately 60 per year. In 2017–2019, the one-year survival rate of Finnish oesophageal cancer patients was 41% and the five-year survival rate 17%.

This is a summary of a recommendation adopted by the Council for Choices in Health Care in Finland (COHERE Finland). The actual recommendation and the related background material are available in Finnish on the website of COHERE Finland under [Recommendations](#). The summary of the recommendation is also available in [Finnish](#) and [Swedish](#).

The Council for Choices in Health Care in Finland (COHERE Finland) works in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and its task is to issue recommendations on services that should be included in the range of public health services. Further information about service choices in healthcare is available on the [COHERE Finland website](#).