Pembrolizumab (Head & Neck)

Indication

Untreated metastatic or unresectable recurrent squamous cell carcinoma of the head and neck with a >/=1% positive PD-L1 CPS score**.**

Performance status 0-1

(NICE TA661)

ICD-10 codes

Codes prefixed with C00-C14 and C30-C33.

Regimen details

Day	Drug	Dose	Route
1	Pembrolizumab	200mg every 3 weeks or 400mg every 6 weeks	IV infusion

Cycle frequency

21 or 42 days as above

Number of cycles

Until unacceptable toxicity, disease progression or to a maximum of 2 years.

Administration

Pembrolizumab should be administered in 100mL sodium chloride 0.9% over 30 minutes.

Pembrolizumab should be administered via an infusion set with an in-line sterile, non-pyrogenic, low protein binding filter (pore size 0.2 – 5.0µm).

After the infusion the line should be flushed with 30mL sodium chloride 0.9%.

Patients should be monitored every 30 minutes during the infusion (blood pressure, pulse and temperature) and for infusion related reactions. For mild to moderate reactions, decrease the infusion rate and closely monitor. Premedication with paracetamol and chlorphenamine should be used for further doses. For severe infusion related reactions discontinue treatment.

Pre-medication

Nil

Emetogenicity

This regimen has low emetogenic potential

Additional supportive medication

Loperamide should be supplied to be used if required.
Antiemetics as per local policy, if required.

Extravasation

Neutral (Group 1)

Investigations – pre first cycle

Investigation	**Validity period** (or as per local policy)
FBC	14 days
U+E (including creatinine)	14 days
LFT	14 days
Thyroid function	14 days
Glucose	14 days
Calcium	14 days
Cortisol	14 days

Investigations – pre each subsequent cycle

Investigation	**Validity period** (or as per local policy)
FBC	7 days
U+E (including creatinine)	7 days
LFT	7 days
Thyroid function	7 days
Glucose	7 days
Cortisol	7 days

Standard limits for administration to go ahead

If blood results not within range, authorisation to administer **must** be given by prescriber/ consultant.

Investigation	**Limit**
Neutrophil count	≥1.0 x 10^9/L
Platelets	≥75 x 10^9/L
Creatinine Clearance (CrCl)	≥ 30mL/min
Bilirubin	≤1.5 x ULN
ALT/AST	<2.5 x ULN
Alkaline Phosphatase	<5 x ULN

Dose modifications

- **Haematological toxicity**

Discuss with the consultant if:
Neutrophils <1.0 x 10^9/L
Platelets <75 x 10^9/L

- **Renal impairment**

The safety and efficacy of pembrolizumab has not been studied in patients with renal impairment. No specific dose adjustments are recommended in mild to moderate renal impairment.
Discuss with consultant if CrCl <30mL/min.

- **Hepatic impairment**

The safety and efficacy of pembrolizumab has not been studied in patients with hepatic impairment. No specific dose adjustments are recommended in mild hepatic impairment. See below for management of hepatitis.

- **Other toxicities**

Patients must be advised to seek specialist advice if they experience side effects as these can worsen rapidly.

Immune reactions may occur during or after completion of treatment. ESMO Clinical Practice Guidelines for management of immunotherapy toxicities can be found here.

Toxicity	Definition	Action
Colitis	Grade 1	Continue and closely monitor
	Grade 2-3	Withhold until symptoms resolve to ≤ grade 1
	Grade 4 or recurrent grade 3	Permanently discontinue pembrolizumab
Pneumonitis	Grade 1	Continue and closely monitor
	Grade 2	Withhold until symptoms resolve to ≤ grade 1
	Grade 3-4 or recurrent grade 2	Permanently discontinue pembrolizumab
Nephritis	Grade 2 (creatinine 1.5-3 x ULN)	Withhold until symptoms resolve to ≤ grade 1
	Grade 3 (creatinine > 3 x ULN)	Permanently discontinue pembrolizumab
Endocrine	Symptomatic hypophysitis	Withhold until symptoms resolve to ≤ grade 1
	Type 1 diabetes with grade > 3 hyperglycaemia (glucose > 13.9 mmol/L) or ketoacidosis	Withhold until ≤ grade 2 May consider recommencing after corticosteroid taper or discontinue.
	Hyperthyroidism ≥ grade 3	Withhold until ≤ grade 2 May consider recommencing after corticosteroid taper or discontinue.
	Hypothyroidism	Continue and manage with replacement therapy
Hepatitis	AST/ALT 3-5 x ULN or Bilirubin > 1.5-3 x ULN	Withhold until resolves to ≤ grade 1
	AST/ALT > 5 x ULN or Bilirubin > 3 x ULN	Permanently discontinue pembrolizumab
	If liver metastasis with baseline AST/ALT 3-5 x ULN: - If AST/ALT increases ≥ 50% for ≥ 1 week	Permanently discontinue pembrolizumab
Infusion-related reactions	Grade 3-4	Permanently discontinue pembrolizumab
Skin reactions	Grade 3 or suspected Stevens-Johnson syndrome (SJS) or toxic epidermal necrolysis (TEN)	Withhold until resolves to ≤ grade 1
	Grade 4 or confirmed SJS or TEN	Permanently discontinue
Other immune-related adverse reactions	Grade 3 or 4 myocarditis Grade 3 or 4 encephalitis Grade 3 or 4 Guillain-Barre syndrome	Permanently discontinue

Pembrolizumab should be permanently discontinued if:
- Grade 4 toxicity (except for endocrinopathies that are controlled with replacement hormones)
- Corticosteroid dosing cannot be reduced to ≤10 mg prednisolone or equivalent per day within 12 weeks
- Treatment-related toxicity does not resolve to Grade 0-1 within 12 weeks after last dose
- Any event occurs a second time at Grade ≥ 3 severity

Adverse effects - for full details consult product literature/ reference texts

- **Serious side effects**

Myelosuppression
Pneumonitis
Colitis
Hepatitis
Nephritis
Endocrinopathies
Pancreatitis

- **Frequently occurring side effects**

Myelosuppression
Reduced appetite
Headache
Dizziness
Dry eyes
Cough
Diarrhoea
Nausea
Rash, pruritus
Fatigue
Hyperglycaemia
Hypocalcaemia
Hyperthyroidism, hypothyroidism

- **Other side effects**

Arthralgia

Significant drug interactions – for full details consult product literature/ reference texts

Corticosteroids: use of systemic corticosteroids at baseline, before starting pembrolizumab, should be avoided because of their potential interference with the pharmacodynamic activity and efficacy of pembrolizumab. However, systemic corticosteroids or other immunosuppressants can be used after starting pembrolizumab to treat immune-related adverse reactions.

Additional comments

Women of child bearing potential should use effective contraception during treatment and for at least 4 months after the last dose.

References

- National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence TA661 accessed 21 September 2023 via www.nice.org.uk
- Summary of Product Characteristics Pembrolizumab - Keytruda® (MSD) accessed 21 September 2023 via www.medicines.org.uk
- Burtness, B. *et al.* Pembrolizumab alone or with chemotherapy versus cetuximab with chemotherapy for recurrent or metastatic squamous cell carcinoma of the head and neck (KEYNOTE-048): a randomised, open-label, phase 3 study. Lancet 2019;394(10212):1915-1928

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Date: September 2023