

COVID-19 Prevention and Treatment Update

1. Background

- 1.1 The CTPG are keen to ensure that their patient population are both informed and advocates for the optimal COVID-19 prevention and treatments available.
- 1.2 To enable this the CTPG has positively engaged with the associated NICE appraisal processes and disseminated key COVID-19 treatment and prevention information to patients through multiple channels.
- 1.3 As can be seen in the CTPG Chair report, COVID-19 continues to present significant challenges to the cardiothoracic transplant population. It continues to impact on their quality of life.

2. Covid Vaccines

- 2.1 Post transplant and other defined high-risk patients are eligible for a spring booster.
- 2.2 The overall feedback from the CTPG patient population continues to be positive around access to Covid 19 vaccines.

3. Covid Preventative Treatments

- 3.1 A new generation prophylactic treatment for COVID-19 has been developed, Sipavibart. This is currently undergoing appraisal by NICE, [Project documents | Sipavibart for preventing COVID-19 \[ID6282\] | Guidance | NICE](#)
- 3.2 The heart transplant recipient population are enthusiastic for an effective COVID-19 preventative treatment and the patient reported evidence would indicate a significant benefit to quality of life would be derived from one.
- 3.3 The CTPG are preparing a patient organisation response to NICE, a draft of which is attached in appendix 1, much of the evidence gathered from a patient survey.

4. Covid Therapies – Expanded Patient Population

- 4.1 Following evidence submitted by the CTPG and British Society for Heart Failure (BSH), NICE revised their guidance for Paxlovid use to include all people with heart failure.
- 4.2 However, NHSE took the unprecedented step of requesting a funding variation period of one year for the expansion of the Paxlovid eligible population.
- 4.3 The CTPG submitted a consultation response and appeal letters against the delay request from NHSE, to NICE, these are shown in Appendices 2, 3 and 4. The letters of response received from Dr Mark Chakravarty, Lead Non-Executive Director for Appeals & Vice Chairman, NICE are shown in appendices 5 and 6.
- 4.4 The CTPG consultation response and appeals have been a partial success, with access to Paxlovid ([Overview | Nirmatrelvir plus ritonavir, sotrovimab and tocilizumab for treating](#)

[COVID-19 | Guidance | NICE](#)) now being available to the following additional cardiac / transplant patient groups;

- people with end-stage heart failure who have a long-term ventricular assistance device
- people on the organ transplant waiting list
- people with heart failure who are in a care home or hospitalised

4.5 The CTPG Chair has informed relevant clinical leaders at NHSBT and administrators of support groups to disseminate information on the expanded clinical groups

4.6 The CTPG are disappointed that NHSE and other NHS bodies appear to have failed to plan for a wider roll out of Paxlovid. This is especially disappointing as clear clinical evidence of the higher risk to people with heart failure, including the DHSC commissioned Edmunds Report published 31 March 2023 ([Defining the highest risk clinical subgroups upon community infection with SARS-CoV-2 when considering the use of neutralising monoclonal antibodies \(nMABs\) and antiviral drugs \(updated March 2023\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)) has been available for 12-18 months.

4.7 The CTPG will continue to liaise with other key cardiac stakeholders in advocating for a further expansion of the Paxlovid eligibility criteria to the entire heart failure population.

5. Covid Therapies – Delivery

5.1 The responsibility for delivering out of hospitals COVID-19 therapies was devolved to ICSs in June 2023.

5.2 From November 2023 (except for Scotland), COVID-19 free test kits are sourced from local pharmacies.

6. COVID-19 – Advice for people whose immune system means they are at higher risk

6.1 To facilitate the discussion on format of future CTAG meetings pertinent extracts from the current Government Guidance (England) are shown in Appendix 7

7. Summary and Recommendations

7.1 COVID-19 continues to have a significant impact on the physical and psychological quality of life of cardiothoracic transplant patients.

7.2 The patient community is disappointed at the lack of information on COVID-19 treatments being provided at both national and local levels. Many patients also report a lack of knowledge and guidance in some transplant centres.

7.3 The CTPG will continue to strongly advocate for improved information and treatments for the population it represents.