

NCPE Assessment

Plain English Summary

March, 2026

Drug name: Pembrolizumab
(pronounced pem-broh-LIH-zoo-mab) in combination with platinum-containing chemotherapy as neoadjuvant treatment, and then continued as monotherapy as adjuvant treatment for the treatment of resectable non-small cell lung carcinoma at high risk of recurrence in adults

Brand name: Keytruda[®]

HTA ID: 24013

What is the NCPE?

The National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE) is a team of experts who look at the health benefits and costs of medicines. The HSE asks us to advise on whether or not a new medicine is good value for money. We give unbiased advice to help the HSE provide the most effective, safe and cost-effective (value for money) treatments for patients.

How do we make our recommendations?

Our main focus is on the health benefits and cost effectiveness of a medicine. We look at the wider costs and health benefits associated with a new medicine, for example:

- Does the new medicine work better than other treatments available in Ireland?
- Is the new medicine easier to give or easier to take compared with other treatments available in Ireland?
- Does the new medicine reduce the need for patients to be hospitalised?
- Does the new medicine improve the quality of a patient's life over other treatments available in Ireland?
- Will the new medicine save resources elsewhere within the health system?

We review the information from clinical trials along with the cost and value for money data presented by the pharmaceutical company. We ask doctors and other healthcare professionals for advice about any health benefits of the new medicine compared with current treatments. We also ask patient organisations to send us their views on how the new drug may improve patients' day-to-day experience of living with a disease.

What is pembrolizumab used for?

Pembrolizumab is a cancer medicine used to treat many different types of cancer. For this assessment, we are focussing only on the use of pembrolizumab, given before surgery in combination with platinum-containing chemotherapy (neoadjuvant treatment) and after surgery (adjuvant treatment)) for adult patients with non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) who are eligible to undergo surgery, and whose cancer is at high risk of coming back. The use of pembrolizumab, in this way, is described in this report as perioperative pembrolizumab.

What recommendation has the NCPE made to the HSE?

We have recommended that the HSE should consider funding perioperative pembrolizumab if its cost effectiveness (value for money) can be improved. The HSE will consider our recommendation and make the final decision about reimbursement (funding). When making the funding decision, the HSE will also consider the additional [criteria](#) outlined in the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013.

We have received a Patient Organisation Submission from Irish Lung Cancer Community about pembrolizumab and shared it with the HSE. This submission will form part of the data that the HSE considers.

Why did we make this recommendation?

We have completed a full health technology assessment of perioperative pembrolizumab. We recommend that the HSE consider providing this medicine if the HSE can agree a suitable price reduction with the pharmaceutical company. We believe that perioperative pembrolizumab may work as well or better than other ways to manage resectable NSCLC at high risk of recurrence in adults.

The HSE considers a number of factors along with our recommendation when deciding whether to provide this medicine. These factors are listed in the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013.

Next steps

When the HSE receives our recommendation, it will look at all the relevant data about perioperative pembrolizumab. The HSE makes the final decision on reimbursement.

Where can I get more information?

You can get more information about pembrolizumab from the following online options:

- the NCPE Technical Summary Document
 - pembrolizumab European Public Assessment Report (EPAR) – [Summary for the public](#)
- or

- searching for pembrolizumab on our website (www.ncpe.ie);
- searching for pembrolizumab on the European Medicines Agency (EMA) website (www.ema.europa.eu).

Please refer to the NCPE website for updated information on the reimbursement status of this medicine