

NCPE Assessment

Plain English Summary

July, 2026

Drug name: Nivolumab-relatlimab (pronounced *niv-ol-umab reh-lat-lih-mab*) for the first-line treatment of advanced (unresectable or metastatic) melanoma in adults and adolescents 12 years of age and older with tumour cell PD-L1 expression < 1%.

Brand name: Opdualag®

HTA ID: 24009

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 nivolumab-relatlimab used for?

Nivolumab-relatlimab is a medicine used to treat advanced melanoma (a type of skin cancer) that has spread or cannot be removed surgically. It is used specifically in patients from 12 years of age whose cancer cells produce a low level (< 1%) of a protein called PD-L1. Nivolumab-relatlimab is made up of two active substances (nivolumab and relatlimab). Nivolumab attaches to a receptor called PD-1 which block the 'turn-off' signals sent by cancer cells to immune cells, allowing the body to keep attacking the cancer cells. Relatlimab

attaches to and blocks another receptor known as LAG-3, which allows the body to activate and send more immune cells to fight the cancer. Using nivolumab and relatlimab together is more effective at killing cancer cells than using them alone.

What recommendation has the NCPE made to the HSE?

We have recommended that the HSE should consider not funding nivolumab-relatlimab unless 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 Melanoma Support Ireland about nivolumab-relatlimab and shared it with the HSE. This submission will form part of the data that the HSE considers.

Why did we make this recommendation?

After reviewing the data presented by the pharmaceutical company, we concluded that it is not clear whether nivolumab-relatlimab works as well or better than other ways to manage this condition. The price of the medicine is too high compared with existing, reimbursed ways to manage this condition, and we believe that the medicine is very poor value for money at the current price.

Next steps

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

Where can I get more information?

You can get more information about nivolumab-relatlimab from the following online options:

- the NCPE Summary Document
- Opdualag® European Public Assessment Report (EPAR) – [Summary for the public](#), or

- searching for nivolumab-relatlimab on our website (www.ncpe.ie);
- searching for nivolumab-relatlimab 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