Chimeric Antigen Receptor T-cell Therapy
Clinical Guideline

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Chimeric Antigen Receptor T-cell (CAR T) Therapy

Introduction

Chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy is an adoptive T-cell therapy that uses engineered T-cell from a patient’s own immune system to attack cancer cells by targeting proteins expressed on the cellular membrane. The process involves obtaining T-cells via a leukapheresis procedure. The cells are sent to a centralized manufacturing facility where they are genetically modified to produce specific chimeric antigen receptors and expanded in a cell culture. This process may take up to several weeks. The product is then returned to the treating facility and re-infused into the patient (Srivastava & Riddell, 2018).

CAR T-cell therapy has shown impressive results in clinical trials in treating various hematologic malignancies (Wang et al., 2019). The trials have demonstrated impressive response rates with durable remissions in heavily pretreated individuals (Berdeja et al., 2017). This technology is being investigated to treat many other malignancies including but not limited to solid organ tumors (Schmidts & Maus, 2018).

The treatment is associated with the occurrence of several specific toxicities including cytokine release syndrome (CRS) and immune effector cell-associated neurotoxicity syndrome (ICANS). CRS is characterized by the rapid release of large amounts of cytokines into the blood after some types of immunotherapy. It is associated with fever, nausea, headache, rash, rapid heart rate, hypotension, and dyspnea. It can range from a mild reaction to a severe life-threatening event. Treatment ranges from purely supportive to the use of an IL-6 antagonist such as tocilizumab. Neurologic toxicity is also observed and can range from mild to severe life-threatening events. Its pathophysiology is not adequately understood at the present time. Treatment is supportive in nature along with the use of steroids (Neelapu et al., 2018).

The purpose of this guideline is to identify the indications for and evidence supporting CAR T-cell therapy.

FDA-approved Agents

Idecabtagene vicleucel (Abecma™) is a B-cell maturation antigen (BCMA)-directed genetically modified autologous T cell immunotherapy that received FDA approval in March 2021 for the treatment of adult patients with relapsed or refractory multiple myeloma after four or more lines of therapy including an immunomodulatory agent, a proteasome inhibitor, and an anti-CD38 monoclonal antibody.

Lisocabtagene maraleucel (Breyanzi®) is a CD-19 directed genetically modified autologous T cell immunotherapy that received FDA approval in February 2021. Lisocabtagene maraleucel (liso-cel) is indicated for the treatment of adults with relapsed or refractory large B-cell lymphoma after two or more lines of systemic therapy, including large B-cell lymphoma (DLBCL) not otherwise specified (including DLBCL arising from indolent lymphoma), high-grade B-cell lymphoma, primary mediastinal large B-cell lymphoma, and follicular lymphoma grade 3B. Liso-cel is administered as a sequential infusion of two components (CD8 and CD4 CAR T cells) at equal target doses.

Tisagenlecleucel (Kymriah™) is a CD19-directed genetically modified autologous T-cell immunotherapy indicated for the treatment of patients up to 25 years of age with B-cell precursor acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) that is refractory or in second or later relapse; adult patients with relapsed or refractory large B-cell lymphoma after two or more lines of systemic therapy including diffuse large B-cell lymphoma (DLBCL) not otherwise specified, high grade B-cell lymphoma and DLBCL arising from follicular lymphoma.
Brexucabtagene autoleucel (Tecartus™) is a CD19-directed genetically modified autologous T cell immunotherapy agent indicated for the treatment of adult patients with relapsed or refractory mantle cell lymphoma (MCL) that received FDA approval July 24, 2020. This indication is approved under accelerated approval based on overall response rate and durability of response. Continued approval for this indication may be contingent upon verification and description of clinical benefit in a confirmatory trial. Tecartus utilizes a patient’s own T cells that are harvested and genetically modified ex vivo by retroviral transduction to express a chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) comprising a murine anti-CD19 single-chain variable fragment (scFv) linked to CD28 and CD3-zeta co-stimulatory domains. On October 1, 2021, the FDA granted approval to add a new indication for adult patients with relapsed or refractory B-cell precursor acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL).

Axicabtagene ciloleucel (Yescarta™) is a CD19-directed genetically modified autologous T cell immunotherapy indicated for the treatment of adult patients with relapsed or refractory large B-cell lymphoma after two or more lines of systemic therapy, including diffuse large B-cell lymphoma (DLBCL) not otherwise specified, primary mediastinal large B-cell lymphoma, and high-grade B-cell lymphoma, DLBCL arising from follicular lymphoma. In March 2021, the FDA granted approval for adult patients with relapsed or refractory follicular lymphoma after two or more lines of systemic therapy. This indication is approved under accelerated approval based on response rate. Continued approval for this indication may be contingent upon verification and description of clinical benefit in confirmatory trial(s).

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) covers autologous treatment for cancer with T-cells expressing at least one chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) when administered at healthcare facilities enrolled in the FDA risk evaluation and mitigation strategies (REMS) and used for either an FDA-approved indication (according to the FDA-approved label for that product), or for other uses when the product has been FDA-approved and the use is supported in one or more CMS-approved compendia. Read the National Coverage Determination for Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T-cell Therapy (110.24) at the following: [https://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/details/ncd-details.aspx?ncdid=374&bc=CAAAAAA]([https://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/details/ncd-details.aspx?ncdid=374&bc=CAAAAAAA](https://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/details/ncd-details.aspx?ncdid=374&bc=CAAAAAA))

Universal Minimum Eligibility Requirements

Along with disease indications, the patient’s performance status and comorbidities are critical considerations for CAR T-cell therapy eligibility. In an expert panel opinion from the American Society for Transplantation and Cellular Therapy (ASTCT), Jain et al., (2019) recommend eligibility evaluation should consider the following:

- Renal function (GFR, Cr)
- Liver function (AST/ALT, bilirubin)
- Cardiac status (LVEF)
- Pulmonary status (dyspnea, pulse ox)
- Hematologic status (ANC, ALC, platelets)
- Baseline neurologic examination and evaluation
• Presence of autoimmune conditions and use of immunosuppressive agents
• Presence of active or uncontrolled infection

Indication

Multiple Myeloma

Multiple myeloma (MM) is a malignant neoplasm of plasma cells in the bone marrow leading to bone destruction and marrow failure. According to the American Cancer Society, MM is most commonly diagnosed in people aged 65 to 74 years and accounts for approximately 18% of hematologic malignancies in the United States. An estimated 34,920 new cases will be diagnosed in the U.S. in 2021, while approximately 12,410 deaths are expected (Siegel et al., 2021).

Newly diagnosed MM is usually sensitive to a variety of classes of drugs: immunomodulatory drugs, proteasome inhibitors, and monoclonal antibodies. Individuals presenting with active (symptomatic) myeloma are treated with primary therapy, followed by high-dose chemotherapy with autologous hematopoietic cell transplant (HCT) in those who are transplant-eligible (NCCN, Multiple Myeloma, v.7.21). The NCCN Multiple Myeloma Panel prefers 3-drug regimens as standard for primary treatment of all patients who are transplant eligible based on improved response rates, depth of response, and rates of progression-free survival or overall survival seen with such regimens in clinical trials. Autologous HCT is considered the standard of care after primary therapy, although relapses are common.

Treatment

Idecabtagene vicleucel (Abecma)

The KarMMa trial (NCT03361748), an open-label, single-arm, multicenter study, evaluated the efficacy and safety of the B-cell maturation antigen (BCMA)-directed CAR T-cell idecabtagene vicleucel (ide-cel) in patients with triple-class-exposed relapsed and refractory myeloma. All enrollees had Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group (ECOG) performance status 0-1, had received at least three prior lines of therapy including an immunomodulatory agent, a proteasome inhibitor, and an anti-CD38 monoclonal antibody, and disease that was refractory to their last regimen (progression within 60 days after last dose) according to International Myeloma Working Group (IMWG) criteria. The median number of prior lines of therapy was 6 (range: 3-16), and 88% of the patients received 4 or more lines of therapy. A total of 112 patients (88%) received bridging therapy during the manufacturing period, with a median duration of 15 days. Responses to bridging were observed in 5 of the 112 patients.

Of the 140 patients enrolled, 128 received ide-cel at a target dose range of $150 \times 10^6$ to $450 \times 10^6$ CAR-positive T-cells. At median follow up (13.3 months), 94 of the 128 patients (73%; 95% CI, 66-81) had a response and 42 of 128 (33%) had a complete response. Minimal residual disease (MRD)-negative status was confirmed in 33 patients (26%). Median progression-free survival (PFS) was 8.8 months (95% CI, 5.6 to 11.6). The $450 \times 10^6$ dose appeared somewhat more effective than the other doses as evidenced by numerically longer PFS (11.3 months) and median response duration (12.1 months). Common toxic effects included neutropenia, anemia, and thrombocytopenia. Cytokine release syndrome was reported in 107 (84%) enrollees, although most episodes were not severe at grade 3 or less, while neurotoxic effects were reported in 23 patients (18%). Fatal adverse reactions occurred in 6%. Patients with a history of
CNS disease, including seizure or cerebrovascular ischemia, or requiring treatment with chronic immunosuppression were excluded from the trial. (Munshi et al., 2021).

Idecabtagene vicleucel (Abecma) is considered medically necessary when:

The member is diagnosed with active, measurable multiple myeloma, relapsed or refractory, and the following criteria are met:

- The member is 18 years of age or older
- The member has received four or more prior lines of therapy including but not limited to ALL of the following:
  - an immunomodulatory agent (e.g., lenalidomide, pomalidomide)
  - a proteasome inhibitor (e.g., bortezomib, carfilzomib, ixazomib)
  - an anti-CD38 monoclonal antibody (e.g., daratumumab, isatuximab)
- Disease was refractory to the last regimen (progression within 60 days after last dose) according to International Myeloma Working Group (IMWG) criteria
- The member has received or will receive a lymphodepleting chemotherapy regimen of cyclophosphamide 300 mg/m² intravenously and fludarabine 30 mg/m² intravenously daily for 3 days before infusion of idecabtagene vicleucel
- The member will not be treated with more than 460 x 10⁶ CAR-positive viable T cells
- The member has not had a prior allogeneic hematopoietic stem cell transplant
- The member does not have CNS involvement with myeloma
- The treating facility is certified under the Abecma Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy (REMS) https://www.abecmarems.com

For a comprehensive list of drugs used to treat multiple myeloma, refer to the following link: Drugs Approved for Multiple Myeloma - National Cancer Institute

National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) guidelines for multiple myeloma (version 7.2021) added Abecma as an option for multiple myeloma in previously treated patients who have received at least four prior therapies including an anti-CD38 monoclonal antibody, a proteasome inhibitor, and an immunomodulatory agent.

Non-Hodgkin Lymphomas

Non-Hodgkin lymphomas (NHLs) are a collection of neoplasms originating in lymphoid tissue and capable of spreading to other organs. Older adults are most often impacted in the sixth and seventh decades. Consequently, patients with NHL may also have significant comorbidities which can complicate treatment options. Prognosis is largely dependent on histologic type, stage, and treatment. In 2021, an estimated 81,560 people will be diagnosed with NHL and there will be approximately 20,720 deaths due to the disease (Siegel et al., 2021). NHLs range from indolent, with essentially a normal life span, to life-threatening, aggressive variants such as diffuse large B cell lymphoma (DLBCL) which is the most common lymphoma, representing as much as 40% of NHL cases globally (Leick et al., 2021). Other major subtypes include chronic lymphocytic leukemia/small lymphocytic lymphoma (CLL/SLL; 19%), follicular lymphoma (FL; 17%), marginal zone lymphoma (MZL; 8%), mantle cell lymphoma (MCL; 4%), and peripheral T-cell lymphoma not otherwise specified (PTCL-NOS; 2%) (Al-Hamadani et al.,2015). Diagnostic accuracy is critical in determining management. Basic pathologic assessment is the same for each subtype although additional evaluation is essential to clarify the diagnosis. Immunohistochemistry is
essential for the differentiation of the various subtypes. The NCCN guidelines include a series of algorithms to provide guidance for surgical pathologists as well as to assist clinicians in the interpretation of pathology reports (NCCN B-cell Lymphoma, version 4.2021).

Standard treatment of NHL depends on the histologic type and stage. Options include a combination of radiation therapy, chemotherapy, monoclonal antibodies, watchful waiting in the case of indolent lymphomas, and hematopoietic stem cell transplant. Patients with aggressive subtypes who do not achieve a cure with initial treatment present unique challenges, often related to their age, comorbidities, or intolerance to high-dose chemotherapy.

**Indication**

**Diffuse Large B-cell Lymphoma**

The SCHOLAR-1 study, pooled data from 2 phase 3 clinical trials (Lymphoma Academic Research Organization-CORAL and Canadian Cancer Trials LY.12) and 2 observational cohorts (MD Anderson Cancer Center and University of Iowa/ Mayo Clinic Lymphoma Specialized Program of Research Excellence). Among 861 patients, 636 were included on the basis of refractory disease inclusion criteria. For patients with refractory DLBCL, the objective response rate was 26% (complete response rate 7%) to the next line of therapy, and the median overall survival was 6.3 months. Twenty percent of patients were alive at 2 years. SCHOLAR-1 demonstrated poor outcomes in patients with refractory DLBCL, supporting the need for more effective therapies for these patients (Crump et al., 2017).

Adoptive cellular therapy via modulation of autologous T cells to express a chimeric antigen receptor (CAR)-T cell has resulted in significant improvement in the outcomes for relapsed/refractory large B cell lymphomas, including long-term durable responses and median overall survival of greater than 2 years (Locke et al., 2019).

**Treatment**

**Axicabtagene ciloleucel (Yescarta)**

ZUMA-1 was a single-arm, multicenter, phase 1/2 trial at 22 sites in the United States and Israel and included 119 patients, of which 108 (91%) were administered the CAR-T cell product axicabtagene ciloleucel (Yescarta) between May 19, 2015 and September 15, 2016. Trial enrollees were 18 years of age or older, and had histologically confirmed large B-cell lymphoma, including diffuse large B-cell lymphoma, primary mediastinal B-cell lymphomas, and transformed follicular lymphoma; refractory disease or relapsed following autologous stem cell transplantation; an ECOG performance status of 0 or 1; and had previously received an anti-CD20 monoclonal antibody-containing regimen and an anthracycline-containing chemotherapy. Refractory disease was defined as progressive or stable disease as best response to the most recent chemotherapy regimen, or progression of disease or relapse within 12 months of autologous stem cell transplantation. Patients with transformed DLBCL must have received previous chemotherapy for follicular lymphoma and developed chemo refractory disease after transformation. No upper age limit was established. The study excluded who had undergone autologous stem cell transplant within 6 weeks of informed consent for ZUMA-1, those with prior allogeneic stem cell transplantation, any history of central nervous system lymphoma, ECOG status ≥ 2 , absolute lymphocyte
count < 100 µL, creatinine clearance < 60mL/min, hepatic transaminases > 2.5 times the upper limit of normal, cardiac ejection fraction < 50%, or active serious infection. Following conditioning chemotherapy with intravenous fludarabine (30 mg/m²) and cyclophosphamide (500 mg/m²) on days -5, -4, and -3, participants received one dose of axicabtagene ciloleucel on day 0 at a target dose of 2 x 10⁶ CAR-positive viable T-cells/kg. Bridging chemotherapy was not permitted. The primary endpoints were safety for phase 1 and the proportion of patients achieving an objective response for phase 2. Critical secondary endpoints were overall survival, progression-free survival, and duration of response (Locke et al., 2019).

At a median follow up of 15.4 months, 89 (82%) of 108 assessable patients with refractory LBCL had an objective response, 63 (58%) had a complete response, and 45 (42%) were in remission (Neelapu et al., 2017). These results led to approval of axicabtagene ciloleucel as third line and higher treatment of relapsed or refractory large B-cell lymphomas including DLBCL, primary mediastinal B-cell lymphoma, high-grade B-cell lymphoma, and transformed follicular lymphoma. All 108 treated patients experienced adverse events, and 106 (98%) had grade 3 or worse events. Grade 3 or worse CRS occurred in 12 (11%) patients and grade 3 or worse neurological events occurred in 35 (32%); all of the events were manageable and largely reversible. Since study initiation, 54 (50%) of 108 patients who received treatment have died (four in phase 1 and 50 in phase 2); 50 of the 54 patients died from progressive disease, with 6 of the deaths occurring after the 12-month analysis (Locke et al., 2019).

To contribute to the body of knowledge around optimal patient selection among those with baseline cardiovascular compromise, Alvi et al. (2019) conducted a retrospective cohort study evaluating the cardiac effects of CAR-T cell therapy. Across 2 institutions, 137 patients received CAR T-cell therapy for relapsed DLBCL (61%), transformed follicular lymphoma (27%) and multiple myeloma (8%). Approximately 50% were treated with axicabtagene ciloleucel or tisagenlecleucel while the remainder received noncommercial (investigational) products. Elevated troponin 29 of 53 (54%) and a decrease of LVEF 8 of 29 (28%) were common. Cardiac events occurred in 17 of 137 patients (12%), including 6 cardiovascular deaths, 6 decompensated heart failures, and 5 arrythmias. All of the cardiac events occurred in the setting of grade 2 or greater CRS and 95% of events occurred after an elevated troponin. Tocilizumab was administered to all patients with CRS at a median of 27 hours (IQR: 16 to 48 hours) after onset. The duration between CSR onset and tocilizumab administration was associated with CV events, where the risk increased 1.7-fold with each 12-hour delay to tocilizumab. Additional studies are warranted to better define the clinical utility of measuring troponin values, consider earlier intervention in less severe grades of CRS, and test the potential benefits of administering tocilizumab based on troponin values.

In the time since axicabtagene ciloleucel approval, many patients who would not have met the eligibility criteria for ZUMA-1, but who were otherwise eligible according to the FDA label, have received CAR T-cell therapy as a standard of care. In a large retrospective study of more than 150 patients treated with axicabtagene ciloleucel, Nastoupil and colleagues (2018) found short-term safety and activity similar to those in ZUMA-1 despite nearly half the patients not meeting ZUMA-1 criteria with respect to performance status, cytopenias, comorbidities, or organ function. According to the authors, these results suggest that axicabtagene ciloleucel CAR T-cell therapy is a feasible treatment option for most patients with refractory/relapsed large B-cell lymphoma. The authors note that ZUMA-1 was not designed to assess quality of life and further studies are needed to understand mechanisms of resistance to CAR T-cell therapy.

**Axicabtagene ciloleucel (Yescarta)** is considered medically necessary for the treatment of relapsed or refractory B-cell lymphoma when the following criteria are met:

- The member is 18 years of age or older
- The member has been diagnosed with relapsed/refractory B-cell lymphoma including any of the following:
  - Diffuse large B-cell lymphoma (DLBCL) not otherwise specified
  - primary mediastinal large B-cell lymphoma
  - high grade B-cell lymphoma
  - DLBCL arising from follicular lymphoma
- The tumor is CD19 positive
- Member received prior treatment with two or more chemoimmunotherapy regimens which included at least one anthracycline or anthracyclinedione-based regimen, unless contraindicated
- The member has experienced disease progression after the last treatment regimen or refractory/suboptimal response to the most recent therapy
- The member has received or will receive lymphodepleting cyclophosphamide 500 mg/m² intravenously and fludarabine 30 mg/m² intravenously on the fifth, fourth, and third day before infusion of axicabtagene ciloleucel
- The target axicabtagene ciloleucel target dose is $2 \times 10^6$ CAR-positive viable T cells per kg body weight, with a maximum of $2 \times 10^8$ CAR-positive viable T cells
- The treating facility is certified under the Yescarta Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy (REMS) System Program https://www.yescarta.com/treatment-centers

The NCCN guidelines for B-cell lymphoma (version 4.2021) recommend Yescarta for the treatment of a variety of B-cell lymphomas in patients with relapsed or refractory disease following two or more lines of systemic therapy, including DLBCL which transformed from follicular lymphoma or nodal marginal zone lymphoma, DLCBL, primary mediastinal large B-cell lymphoma, and high-grade B-cell lymphoma. In patients with follicular lymphoma for whom treatment with CAR T is intended, NCCN indicates bendamustine should be used with caution unless after leukapheresis prior to CAR T-cell therapy since it could impact the success of the patient's T-cell collection (footnote l).

**Tisagenlecleucel (Kymriah)**

High rates of durable remission among patients with relapsed or refractory DLBCL were observed in a single-center case-series study (NCT02030834) by Schuster et al. (2017). A total of 28 adult patients with CD19+ DLBCL or follicular lymphoma with no curative treatment options, a limited prognosis (<2 years anticipated survival), and a partial response to or stable disease following most recent chemotherapy received tisagenlecleucel (previously known as CTL019) at a median total cell dose of $5.00 \times 10^8$ (range $1.79 \times 10^8$ to $5.00 \times 10^8$). The median number of days from apheresis to infusion was 39 (range 27 to 145); 10 of the 28 patients received bridging therapy administered after apheresis and before lymphodepleting chemotherapy. Response rate was 50% at 3 months, with 43% of the patients having a complete response at 6 months. No patients with a complete response at 6 months had a relapse by the median follow-up of 28.6 months. On the basis of Schuster, as well as a previous study (Maude et al., 2014; Maude et al., 2016) in children and young adults with relapsed or refractory acute lymphoblastic leukemia, a pivotal phase 2 study was conducted to evaluate safety and efficacy in adults with relapsed or refractory DLBCL.

The safety and efficacy of tisagenlecleucel (Kymriah™) was evaluated in the JULIET trial (NCT02445248), an open-label, multicenter, single-arm study enrolling 160 patients, aged 18 years and older with relapsed or refractory DLCBL who had received ≥ 2 lines of chemotherapy, including rituximab.
and anthracycline, or relapsed following autologous stem cell transplantation. Patients with active central nervous system malignancy, prior allogeneic stem cell transplantation, ECOG performance status of ≥ 2, a creatinine clearance < 60 mL/min, alanine aminotransferase > 5 times normal, cardiac ejection fraction < 45%, or absolute lymphocyte concentration < 300/µL were excluded. Lymphodepleting chemotherapy consisting of either fludarabine (25 mg/m² IV daily for 3 days and cyclophosphamide 250 mg/m² IV daily for 3 days starting with the first dose of fludarabine or bendamustine 90mg/m², following which tisagenlecleucel was administered as a single intravenous infusion. Bridging chemotherapy between leukapheresis and chemotherapy was permitted to control disease burden. Objective response rate per Lugano criteria and duration of response were the major outcome measures. The most common adverse events were cytokine release syndrome (CRS) (58%) with a median time from infusion to the onset of symptoms 3 days and the median duration 7 days. Patients responded to either tocilizumab or tocilizumab and glucocorticoids, with no patient receiving more than 2 doses of tocilizumab. Infections concurrent with CRS occurred in 6% of these patients. The study investigators concluded that a high rate and duration of response to tisagenlecleucel had been demonstrated among heavily pretreated adults with relapsed/refractory DLBCL. With rates of complete and partial response at 32% and 5%, respectively, and sustained through 6 months, suggests responses at 3 months are usually durable (Schuster et al., 2019).

A poster presentation at the 62nd ASH® Annual Meeting and Exposition, convened December 5-8, 2020, updated efficacy results with a 40-month median follow-up and associations with baseline Myc overexpression in tumor and tumor microenvironment characteristics (ASH, 2020). At median follow-up of 40.3 months (as of February 20, 2020), 115 patients had received tisagenlecleucel infusion. Relapse-free probability was 60.4% at 24 and 30 months and median duration of response was not reached (95% CI, 10 – not estimable [NE]) among the 61 patients with a response. Median OS among all infused patients was 11.1 months (95% CI, 6.6-23.9). Median OS of patients with CR (n=37) or PR (n=7) month 3 was not reached. 80% CR patients had an OS of 20 months or longer. Also reported was improved outcomes, including longer median DOR, PFS, and OS, in patients with baseline Myc – status as compared with Myc + patients. The authors concluded these updated data demonstrate sustained benefit in responding patients, particularly long-term OS for the majority of patients with CR and suggest that Myc overexpression, or an unfavorable immunosuppressive tumor microenvironment (TME) with restricted T-cell response, may impact CAR-T efficacy on patients with DLBCL.

**Tisagenlecleucel (Kymriah)** is considered medically necessary for the treatment of patients with relapsed or refractory B-cell lymphoma when the following criteria are met:

- The member is 18 years of age or older
- The member has been diagnosed with relapsed/refractory B-cell lymphoma including any of the following:
  - Diffuse large B-cell lymphoma (DLBCL) not otherwise specified,
  - High grade B-cell lymphoma
  - DLBCL arising from follicular lymphoma and the following criteria are met:
- The tumor is CD19 positive
- The member has received two or more lines of systemic therapy
- For diffuse large B-cell lymphoma arising from follicular lymphoma: member received prior treatment with two or more chemoimmunotherapy regimens which included at least one anthracycline or anthracenedione-based regimen, unless contraindicated.
- The member has received or will receive a lymphodepleting chemotherapy regimen within two weeks preceding tisagenlecleucel infusion:
- fludarabine 25 mg/m² intravenously daily for three days and cyclophosphamide 250 mg/m² intravenously daily for 3 days starting with the first dose of fludarabine **OR**
- alternate therapy with bendamustine 90 mg/m² intravenously daily for two days for those unable to receive cyclophosphamide due to a previous Grade 4 hemorrhagic cystitis with cyclophosphamide or demonstrates resistance to a previous cyclophosphamide containing regimen **OR**
- lymphodepleting chemotherapy may be omitted if WBC is ≤ 1 x 10⁹/L within one week prior to tisagenlecleucel infusion
  - The member will not be treated with more than 6.0 x 10⁸ CAR-positive viable T cells
  - The treating facility is certified under the Kymriah Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy (REMS) System Program [https://www.us.kymriah.com/treatment-center-locator/](https://www.us.kymriah.com/treatment-center-locator/)

The NCCN guidelines for B-cell lymphoma (version 4.2021) recommend Kymriah as a treatment option for DLBCL arising from follicular lymphoma and nodal marginal zone lymphoma only after two or more lines of systemic therapy.

**Lisocabtagene maraleucel (Breyanzi)**

TRANSCEND (NCT02631044), a multicenter, multicohort, seamless design study at 14 centers in the United States assessed the safety and activity of Lisocabtagene maraleucel (Breyanzi) in patients with PET-positive relapsed or refractory DLBCL (de novo or transformed from any indolent lymphoma), high-grade B-cell lymphoma with rearrangements in MYC and either BCL2, BCL6, or both (double- or triple-hit lymphoma), primary mediastinal B-cell lymphoma, or follicular lymphoma grade 3B. Patients must have received two or more previous lines of systemic treatment, including anthracycline-based chemotherapy and an anti-CD20 antibody, with subsequent relapse and may have received a previous autologous or allogeneic hematopoietic stem cell transplant. Bridging chemotherapy, radiation therapy or both, after leukapheresis was allowed but required reconfirmation of PET-positive disease before lymphodepleting chemotherapy consisting of fludarabine (30mg.m²) and cyclophosphamide (300mg/m²) was administered daily for 3 days. A total of 159 (59%) patients received bridging therapy but it did not result in a lower tumor burden in most patients. Primary endpoints were the incidence of adverse events, the probability of dose-limiting toxicities, and the objective response rate. The proportion of patients achieving a complete response, duration of response, progression-free survival, and cellular kinetic variable were secondary endpoints. Of 344 patients with DLBCL who underwent leukapheresis between January 11, 2016 and July 5, 2019, 294 received CAR T cells a median of 3 days (IQR 3-4) after lymphodepleting chemotherapy. Lymphoma complications or death prior to infusion occurred in 48 patients and product could not be manufactured for two patients. Of the 294 who received CAR T cells, 269 received liso-cel while 25 received a non-conforming CAR T product. The median dose was 91x10⁶ CAR T cells (range 44-156x10⁶). No maximum tolerated dose was identified, and no dose relationship was observed for overall safety and activity across all does levels. There were 25 patients across 5 treatment sites who received CAR T cell infusions in the outpatient setting. Of those 25 patients, 18 (72%) were hospitalized for adverse events including 10 with cytokine release syndrome (CRS), neurological events, or both. Median time from infusion to hospitalization was 5 days.

The most frequent treatment-emergent adverse events among the 269 patients treated with liso-cel were neutropenia in 169 (63%) patients, anemia in 129 (48%), fatigue in 119 (44%), CRS of any grade in 113 (42%), and nausea in 90 (33%). CRS grade 3 or worse occurred in six (2%) patients. No patients died from CRS although two patients died with ongoing CRS, one from septic shock and one from pulmonary hemorrhage. CRS was managed with tocilizumab, corticosteroids, or both in 52 (20%) patients; 27 (10%)
received tocilizumab alone. Other interventions included vasopressors, and both siltuximab and anakinra. Neurological events of any grade occurred in 80 (30%) patients with grade 3 or worse occurring in 27 (10%). The most common neurological events of any grade included encephalopathy in 57 patients, 21% of patients overall and 71% of patients with neurological events, tremor and aphasia in 26 patients, 10% of patients overall and 33% of patients with neurological events, and delirium in 16 patients, 6% of patients overall and 20% of patients with neurological events. Higher tumor burden increased inflammatory markers and having received bridging therapy were associated with a higher incidence of CRS, neurological events, or both of any grade.

The efficacy-evaluable set included 256 patients. An objective response rate was achieved by 186 (73%, 95% CI 66.8-78.0) patients and a complete response by 136 (53%, 95% CI 46.8-59.4) patients. Investigators reported the responses were durable with an estimated duration of response at 1 year of 55% among patients who had a complete or partial response and 65% among those who achieved a complete response. Progression-free survival and overall survival at 1-year were 44% and 58%, respectively. TRANSCEND is notable for enrolling a large population of older patients (112 [42%] of 269 patients were aged ≥ 65 years) and including patients with understudied subtypes including follicular lymphoma grade 3B, DLBCL transformed from indolent lymphoma, and secondary CNS lymphoma. Additional studies of these subsets are warranted owing to the small number of patients. TRANSCEND included six evaluable patients with secondary CNS lymphoma while both ZUMA-1 and JULIET excluded such patients. Three of the six (50%) achieved a complete response, two (33%) patients experienced grade 3 neurological events, and none had severe CRS. Investigators call for additional studies on the management of these patients receiving CAR T-cell treatment, particularly with respect to neurological events. TRANSCEND investigators concluded their findings demonstrate liso-cel can lead to rapid and durable remission, with low incidence of all-grade and severe CRS and neurological events in patients with high-risk aggressive relapsed or refractory large B-cell lymphomas (Abramson et al., 2020).

**Lisocabtagene maraleucel (Breyanzi)** is considered medically necessary for the treatment of members with relapsed or refractory B-cell lymphoma when the following criteria are met:

- Member is 18 years of age or older
- Member has been diagnosed with relapsed/refractory B-cell lymphoma including any of the following:
  - Diffuse large B-cell Lymphoma (DLBCL) not otherwise specified (including DLBCL arising from indolent lymphoma)
  - High-grade B-cell lymphoma
  - Primary mediastinal large B-cell lymphoma
- The member has experienced disease progression following two or more lines of systemic therapy:
  - previous chemoinmunotherapy included anthracycline-based chemotherapy (e.g. doxorubicin, epirubicin) and an anti-CD20 antibody (e.g. rituximab)
- The member has received or will receive a lymphodepleting chemotherapy regimen of cyclophosphamide 300 mg/m² intravenously and fludarabine 30 mg/m² intravenously daily for three days before infusion of Lisocabtagene maraleucel
- The member will not be treated with more than 110 x 10⁶ CAR-positive viable T cells (consisting of CD8 and CD4 components
- The treating facility is certified under the Breyanzi Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy (REMS) [https://www.breyanzirems.com](https://www.breyanzirems.com)

NCCN guidelines for B-cell lymphoma (version 4.2021) recommends Breyanzi as a treatment for High-grade B-cell lymphomas with translocations of MYC and BCL2 and/or BCL6 (double/triple hit lymphoma),
histologic transformation of follicular lymphoma to DLBCL, histologic transformation of nodal marginal zone lymphoma to DLBCL, relapsed/refractory primary mediastinal large B-cell lymphoma, and relapsed/refractory high-grade B-cell lymphoma NOS. Two or more chemoimmunotherapy regimens must have been tried and failed for all indications.

**Indication**

**Follicular Lymphoma**

Follicular lymphoma (FL) is the most common form of indolent lymphoma and accounts for approximately 22% of all lymphomas diagnosed (NCCN B-cell Lymphomas Guideline, version 4.2021). According to National Institutes of Health Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End results Program (SEER) data, the rate of new cases of FL was 2.7 per 100,000 men and women per year and the death rate was 0.4 per 100,000 men and women per year based on analysis of 2014 – 2018 statistics. Clinical heterogeneity remains poorly understood. Some patients have an indolent disease trajectory over several decades while others experience an aggressive clinical course, often accompanied by histologic transformation and poor prognosis. In a 2019 pooled cohort analysis of 1654 newly diagnosed patients with follicular lymphoma grade 1-3A between 2001 and 2013, Sarkozy et al. (2019) examined 10-year overall survival to classify cause of death. In the overall cohort, lymphoma was the most common cause of death with a cumulative incidence of 10.3% at 10 years, followed by treatment-related mortality (3.0%), other malignancy (2.9%), other causes (2.2%), and unknown (3.0%). Despite favorable (80%) 10-year overall survival, lymphoma remains the leading cause of death in the first decade after diagnosis representing an unmet treatment need.

**Treatment**

**Lisocabtagene maraleucel (Breyanzi)**

The use of Lisocabtagene maraleucel (Breyanzi®) as a treatment of Grade 3B FL is supported by the outcomes of the TRANSCEND (NCT02631044) trial. TRANSCEND is discussed above.

**Lisocabtagene maraleucel (Breyanzi)** is considered medically necessary for the treatment of members with relapsed or refractory B-cell lymphoma when the following criteria are met:

- Member is 18 years of age or older
- Member has been diagnosed with follicular lymphoma grade 3B
- The member has experienced disease progression following two or more lines of systemic therapy:
  - previous chemoimmunotherapy included anthracycline-based chemotherapy (e.g. doxorubicin, epirubicin) and an anti-CD20 antibody (e.g. rituximab)
- The member has received or will receive a lymphodepleting chemotherapy regimen of cyclophosphamide 300 mg/m² intravenously and fludarabine 30 mg/m² intravenously daily for three days before infusion of Lisocabtagene maraleucel
- The member will not be treated with more than 110 x 10⁶ CAR-positive viable T cells (consisting of CD8 and CD4 components
Axicabtagene ciloleucel (Yescarta)

Efficacy of axicabtagene ciloleucel as a treatment of FL is based on a single-arm, open-label multicenter trial (ZUMA-5; NCT03105336). ZUMA-5 evaluated a single infusion target dose of $2 \times 10^6$ anti-CD20 CAR T cells/kg following a lymphodepleting regimen of cyclophosphamide 500mg/m² intravenously and fludarabine 30mg/m² intravenously in adults with relapsed or refractory FL (grades 1-3A) or marginal zone lymphoma (MZL) (nodal or extranodal) following two or more lines of systemic therapy, including the combination of an alkylation agent and an anti-CD20 monoclonal antibody. The primary endpoint was objective response rate (ORR). Secondary endpoints included complete response (CR) rate, duration of response (DOR), progression-free survival (PFS), overall survival (OS), incidence of adverse events (AE), and levels of CAR T cells in blood and cytokines in serum.

Jacobson et al. (ASH 2020) reported that by March 12, 2020, 146 patients (124 FL; 22 MZL) had received an infusion; 84 patients with FL had ≥ 12 months follow-up. The median age was 61 years (range, 34 – 79); 57% were male. Thirty-eight percent had ECOG 1, 86% had stage III/IV disease, 47% had ≥ 3 FLIPI, and 49% had high tumor bulk (GELF). Enrollees had a median 3 prior lines of therapy (range 1-10) and 64% had ≥ 3 prior lines. 55% of patients experienced disease progression < 2 years after initial chemoimmunotherapy and 68% were refractory to their last prior treatment.

At median follow-up of 17.5 months (range, 1.4 – 31.6), the ORR was 92% among 104 efficacy-evaluable patients, with a 76% CR rate. In patients with FL ($n = 84$), the ORR was 94% (80% CR rate) while in those with MZL ($n = 20$), the ORR was 85% (60% CR rate). The medians for DOR, PFS, and OS were not reached; the authors reported 12-month estimated rates were 72% (95% CI, 61-80), 74% (95% CI, 63082), and 93% (95% CI, 86-97), respectively.

AEs ≥ grade 3 occurred in 86% of patients (85% in FL; 95% in MZL). The most common AEs were neutropenia (33%), decreased neutrophil count (27%), and anemia (23%). Grade ≥ 3 cytokine release syndrome (CRS) occurred in 7% of patients (6% in FL; 9% in MZL), while grade ≥ 3 neurological events (NE) occurred in 19% of patients (15% in FL; 41% in MZL). Most CRS and NEs had resolved by data cutoff. Of note, grade 5 AEs occurred in 3 patients including multisystem organ failure in the context of CRS ($n = 1$ FL), aortic dissection ($n = 1$ FL), and coccidioidomycosis infection ($n = 1$ MZL), the latter 2 AEs were considered unrelated to CAR T.

In ZUMA-5, patients were eligible for retreatment if they progressed after achieving a CR or PR at the 3-month post-infusion assessment, had no evidence of CD19 loss in progression biopsy, and had no grade 4 CRS or NEs with the first treatment. Chavez and colleagues reported (ASCO 2020) that 11 patients (9 FL; 2 MZL) had been retreated as of March 12, 2020. Prior to first treatment, 82% of patients had stage 3-4 disease, 91% had ≥ 3 FLIPI, and 91% had high tumor bulk (GELF). Median prior lines of therapy were 4 (range, 2-7); 60% of patients progressed < 2 years after initial anti-CD20 monoclonal antibody-containing therapy, and 82% had refractory disease. Those retreated had significantly higher tumor burden before first treatment than those who were not retreated. After first treatment, 10 patients achieved a CR and 1 patient achieved a PR. The first median DOR was 8.3 months (range, 1.9 – 11.8). CRS grade 4 occurred in 1 patient and 3 patients experienced grade 2. Grade 3 NEs occurred in 1 patient and 3 patients experienced grade 3. Among the FL patients, those who received retreatment ($n = 9$) had lower median peak CAR T cell levels at first treatment versus other FL patients ($n = 115$) who did not receive...
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re-treatment (13.2 vs 41.9 cells/µL; \(P = .024\)); median peak CAR T cell levels were also lower when normalized by tumor burden (0.003 vs 0.023 cells/ µL x mm²; \(P = .006\)). Similar trends were observed in the patients with MZL. All 11 patients responded to re-treatment, with 10 patients achieving a CR and 1 achieving a PR. With a median follow up of 2.3 months, the median DOR to re-treatment was not reached (range, < 1 – 8.4 months). Responses were ongoing for 9 patients (82%) at data cutoff. Comparable instances of CRS and NE were observed with re-treatment as with first treatment. Confirmatory analyses with more patients and longer follow up are needed.

**Axicabtagene ciloleucel (Yescarta)** is considered medically necessary for the treatment of relapsed or refractory follicular lymphoma when the following criteria are met:
- The member is 18 years of age or older
- The member demonstrates disease progression following two or more lines of systemic therapy and:
  - Progression occurred < two years after initial chemoimmunotherapy
  - Refractory to last prior treatment
  - Has Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group (ECOG) performance status of 0-1 and adequate renal, hepatic, pulmonary, and cardiac function
- Member does not have a primary central nervous system lymphoma
- Previous treatments must have included, but are not limited to all of the following
  - A combination of anti-CD20 monoclonal antibody (e.g., rituximab) and
  - An alkylating agent (e.g., bendamustine, cyclophosphamide)-containing regimen
- The member has received or will receive lymphodepleting cyclophosphamide 500 mg/m² intravenously and fludarabine 30 mg/m² intravenously on the fifth, fourth, and third day before infusion of axicabtagene ciloleucel
- The target axicabtagene ciloleucel target dose is \(2 \times 10^6\) CAR-positive viable T cells per kg body weight, with a maximum of \(2 \times 10^8\) CAR-positive viable T cells
- The treating facility is certified under the Yescarta Risk Evaluation and Mitigations Strategy (REMS) System Program [https://www.yescarta.com/treatment-centers](https://www.yescarta.com/treatment-centers)

### Indication

**Mantle Cell Lymphoma**

Mantle cell lymphoma is a mature B-cell neoplasm typically composed of monomorphic small to medium sized lymphoid cells with irregular nuclear contours. There are several variants of Mantle cell lymphoma including blastoid, an aggressive variant where cells resemble lymphoblasts with dispersed chromatin and a high mitotic rate; pleomorphic, an aggressive variant where cells are pleomorphic, but many are large with oval to irregular nuclear contours, generally pale cytoplasm, and other prominent nucleoli in at least some of the cells; small-cell, distinguished by small round lymphocytes with more clumped chromatin, either admixed or predominant, mimicking a small lymphocytic lymphoma; and marginal zone-like in which there are prominent foci of cells with abundant pale cytoplasm resembling marginal zone or monocytoid B cells, mimicking a marginal zone lymphoma, sometime these paler foci also resemble proliferation centers of chronic lymphocytic leukemia/small lymphocytic lymphoma. Most patients present in stage III or IV. Spleen, bone marrow and liver are common metastatic sites. The median age of onset is 60 years and predominance is male. Mantle cell accounts for 3-10% of all non-Hodgkin lymphomas. (NIH, National Cancer Institute, Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results Program, 2021).
Treatment

**Brexucabtagene autoleucel (Tecartus)**

Wang et al., (2020) reported the results of ZUMA-2 (NCT02601212), a single-arm, open label, multicenter trial evaluating the safety and efficacy of a single infusion of brexucabtagene autoleucel (Tecartus™) in adults with relapsed or refractory mantle cell lymphoma (MCL) who had previously received anthracycline- or bendamustine-containing chemotherapy, an anti-CD20 antibody, and a Bruton tyrosine kinase inhibitor (BTKi; ibrutinib or acalabrutinib). Eligible patients also had disease progression after their last regimen or were refractory to their most recent treatment. BTKi therapy was not required to be the last line of therapy before trial entry and patients were not required to have disease that was refractory to BTKi therapy. ZUMA-2 excluded those with active or serious infections, prior allogeneic hematopoietic stem cell transplant (HSCT), detectable cerebrospinal fluid malignant cells or brain metastasis, and any history of CNS lymphoma or CNS disorders. The primary endpoint was the percentage of patients with an objective response (complete or partial response). Secondary end points included DOR, PFS, and OS.

A total of 74 patients were enrolled and Tecartus was administered to 68. Of the 68 to receive a single infusion, 60 (88.23%) were considered efficacy-evaluable having been followed for at least 6 months after their first objective response. Lymphodepleting therapy consisting of cyclophosphamide 500 mg/m² intravenously and fludarabine 30 mg/m² intravenously was administered to 53 (88%) of the 60 patients on the fifth, fourth, and third days prior to Tecartus infusion. The remaining 7 patients (12%) either received lymphodepletion over 4 or more days or received Tecartus 4 or more days after completing lymphodepletion. The primary efficacy analysis demonstrated 93% (95% CI, 84-98) of the 60 patients had an objective response; 67% (95% CI, 53-78) had a complete response. At a median follow-up of 12.3 months (range, 7.0-32.3), 57% of the 60 patients in the primary efficacy analysis were in remission. At 12 months, the estimated PFS was 61%, while OS was 83%. The most frequent adverse events of grade 3 or higher were cytopenias (in 94% of patients) and infections (32%). Grade 3 or higher CRS occurred in 15% and NEs occurred in 31%; none were fatal. Two patients experienced grade 5 infectious adverse events. Of the 60 evaluable patients, the median age was 65 years (range, 38-79) and 51 (85%) were male. 50 patients (83%) had stage IV disease. The median number of prior therapies was 3 (range, 2-5) and 26 (43%) of patients had relapsed following or were refractory to autologous HSCT. Twenty-one (35%) had relapsed after their last therapy for MCL, while 36 (60%) were refractory to their last therapy for MCL. Twenty-one (35%) received bridging therapy: 16 (27%) were treated with a BTKi, 9 (15%) with a corticosteroid, and 4 (7%) with both. Two patients who had disease progression following an objective response received a second infusion approximately 1 year and 1.3 years after the initial infusion. Analysis in these patients is ongoing.

**Brexucabtagene autoleucel (Tecartus)** is considered medically necessary for the treatment of relapsed or refractory mantle cell lymphoma and the following criteria are met:

- The member is 18 years of age or older
- The member has been treated with ALL of the following:
- An anthracycline or bendamustine-containing chemotherapy
- Anti-CD20 monoclonal antibody therapy (e.g., rituximab)
- A Bruton tyrosine kinase (BTK) inhibitor indicated for mantle cell lymphoma (e.g., acalabrutinib, ibrutinib, zanubrutinib)

Disease progression has occurred following the last regimen or disease is refractory to the most recent therapy
- The member has received or will receive a lymphodepleting chemotherapy regimen of cyclophosphamide 500 mg/m² intravenously and fludarabine 30 mg/m² intravenously on each of the fifth, fourth, and third days before infusion of brexucabtagene autoleucel
- The member will not be treated with more than 2 x 10⁸ CAR-positive viable T cells
- The treating facility is certified under the Tecartus Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy (REMS) System Program

https://www.tecartus.com/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI2t7WktO06wIVzMDACH0LfQRHEAYASAAEgJdRPD_BwE

NCCN guidelines for B-cell lymphoma (version 4.2021) recommend Tecartus as third line therapy only after chemoimmunotherapy and BTK inhibitor.

## Indication

### Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL) in children and young adults

ALL is a heterogeneous hematologic disease characterized by the proliferation of immature lymphoid cells in the bone marrow, peripheral blood, and other organs. The age-adjusted incidence rate of ALL in the United States is 1.38 per 100,000 individual per year, with approximately 6,150 new cases and 1,520 deaths estimated in 2020. The median age at diagnosis for ALL is 15 years with 55.4% of patients diagnosed at younger than 20 years. ALL represents 75% to 80% of acute leukemias among children making it the most common form of childhood leukemia (Siegal et al., 2020).

## Treatment

The efficacy of tisagenlecleucel (Kymriah) in pediatric and young adults with relapsed or refractory B-cell precursor acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) was evaluated in an open-label, multicenter single-arm trial (ELIANA, NCT02228096). As reported by Maude and colleagues (2018), eligible patients were at least 3 years of age at screening and no older than 21 years of age at diagnosis and must have had at least 5% lymphoblasts in bone marrow screening. Any patients who had received anti-CD19 therapy were excluded. The primary end point was overall remission rate higher than 20%. Overall remission rate was defined as the rate of best overall response of either complete remission or complete remission with incomplete hematologic recovery within 3 months. Responses were required to be maintained for at least 28 days. Secondary endpoints included the rate of complete remission or complete remission with incomplete hematologic recovery with undetectable minimal residual disease (<0.01%) assessed by central multiparameter flow cytometry, the duration of remission, event-free survival, overall survival, cellular kinetics, and safety.
Between April 8, 2015 and the data cutoff on April 25, 2017, a total of 107 patients were screened and 92 were enrolled. A total of 75 patients received a single infusion of tisagenlecleucel and were efficacy evaluable. The median duration of follow up was 13.1 months. Median age of enrollees was 11 years (range, 2-23) and had received a median of 3 previous therapies (range, 1-8). The median marrow blast percentage was 74% (range, 5-99) and 46 patients (61%) had undergone previous allogeneic hematopoietic stem cell transplantation (HSCT). Prior to infusion, 72 of the 75 patients (96%) received lymphodepleting chemotherapy; the 3 remaining patients were leukopenic and chemotherapy was withheld at investigator discretion.

The overall remission rate within 3 months was 81%, with all patients who had a response found negative for residual disease. The rate of event-free-survival was 73% (95% CI, 60-82) and the overall survival rate was 90% (95% CI, 81-95) at 6 months and 50% (95% CI, 35-64) and 76% (95% CI, 63-86) at 12 months. Among the patients with complete remission with or without complete hematologic recovery, the median response duration was not reached. Among patients with complete remission, 17 had a relapse before receiving additional anticancer therapy. Relapse also occurred in 3 patients who received new cancer therapy for the emergence of minimal residual disease or loss of tisagenlecleucel persistence and 2 patients who had been classified as not having a response to treatment because remission was not maintained for a minimum of 28 days. No patients were found to have relapses in the CNS during primary follow-up.

All patients had at least one adverse event. Grade 3 or 4 adverse events that were suspected to be related to infusion occurred in 73% of patients. Notably, CRS occurred in 77% of patients, 48% of whom received tocilizumab. Within 8 weeks following infusion, febrile neutropenia occurred in 35% of patients, and grade 3 or 4 neutropenia occurred in 46 of 75 patients (61%). Fever, neutropenia, and CRS often occurred concurrently after lymphodepleting therapy and tisagenlecleucel infusion. Neurologic events occurred in 40% of patients and were managed with supportive care. The most common NEs of any grade were encephalopathy (11%), confusional state (9%), delirium (9%), tremor (8%), agitation (7%), and somnolence (7%). The majority of NEs occurred during CRS or shortly after its resolution.

Overall, high response rates were shown, and remissions were durable with a 6-month relapse-free survival rate of 80%. The durability of the clinical response was associated with persistence of tisagenlecleucel in peripheral blood and with persistent B-cell aplasia. The risks associated tisagenlecleucel are significant but were mitigated in most patients with supportive care and cytokine blockade.

**Tisagenlecleucel (Kymriah)** is considered medically necessary for the treatment of refractory or second or later relapsed B-cell precursor acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) when the following criteria are met:

- The member is 25 years of age or younger
- The member has confirmed CD19 tumor expression
- Philadelphia Chromosome positive (Ph+) and ONE of the following:
  - Less than complete response
  - High-risk genetics
  - Tyrosine kinase inhibitor (TKI) intolerant or refractory (TKIs include dasatinib tablets, imatinib tablets, ponatinib tablets, nilotinib capsules, and bosutinib tablets
  - Relapse following allogeneic hematopoietic stem cell transplantation

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- The member has been treated with two cycles of standard chemotherapy without a complete response or achieved a complete response and experienced multiple relapses following at least two cycles of standard chemotherapy
- The member has received or will receive lymphodepleting chemotherapy regimen of fludarabine 30 mg/m² intravenously daily for four days and cyclophosphamide 500 mg/m² intravenously daily for two days (starting with the first dose of fludarabine) within two weeks preceding tisagenlecleucel infusion
- A member weighing 50kg or less will receive weight-based dosing at 0.2 to 5.0 x 10⁶ CAR-positive viable T cells per kg of body weight
- The member will not be treated with more than 2.5 x 10⁶ CAR-positive viable T cells
- The member does not have active, uncontrolled CNS ALL
- The treating facility is certified under the Kymriah Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy (REMS) System Program https://www.us.kymriah.com/treatment-center-locator/

The NCCN guidelines for Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (version 1.2021) address KYMRIAH. For Ph+ B-cell ALL, Kymriah is listed as a treatment option for individuals < 26 years of age and with refractory disease or ≥ two relapses and failure of two TKIs. In Ph- B-cell ALL, Kymriah is cited as a therapy option for individuals < 26 years of age and with refractory disease or ≥ two relapses. The guideline further states the role of allogeneic HSCT following Kymriah is unclear.

**Indication**

**Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL) in adults**

ALL is a heterogeneous hematologic disease characterized by the proliferation of immature lymphoid cells in the bone marrow, peripheral blood, and other organs. While ALL occurs predominantly in children, adult ALL represents approximately 20% of all leukemias in adults and is significantly more challenging to treat. Despite high rates of CR (80%-90%) in adult ALL, cure rates are only 40%-50% due to relapses. The 1-year overall survival rate is 26% following first salvage therapy and decreases with subsequent relapses (Paul et al., 2016). While blinatumomab and inotuzumab ozogamicin have resulted in complete remission or complete remission with incomplete hematological recovery in 35.1% (blinatumomab) and 80.7% (inotuzumab ozogamicin), median overall survival remains less than 8 months and is significantly dependent on allo-SCT consolidation. Allo-SCT has been the best curative option for relapsed or refractory disease, but fewer than 50% of eligible patients will proceed to transplant (Gökbuget et al., 2012). CAR T-cell therapies are a promising approach for the treatment of relapsed or refractory disease.

**Treatment**

**Brexucabtagene autoleucel (Tecartus)**

Shah et al. (2021) reported the phase 2 results of ZUMA-3, an international multicenter, single arm, open-label study (NCT02614066) evaluating the safety and efficacy of the autologous anti-CD 19 chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy KTE-X19 in adult patients with relapsed or refractory B-precursor acute lymphoblastic leukemia. Eligible patients were 18 years of age or older, with Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group (ECOG) performance status of 0-1, and morphological disease in the bone marrow (>5% blasts). Relapsed or refractory disease was defined as primary refractory, first relapse with
remission of 12 months or less, relapsed or refractory after at least two previous lines of systemic therapy, or relapsed or refractory after allo-SCT. Patients could have received previous blinatumomab. Following leukapheresis and conditioning chemotherapy (intravenous fludarabine 25mg/m² on days -4, -3, and -2; and intravenous cyclophosphamide 900mg/m² on day -2) patients received a single KTE-X19 infusion (1x10⁶ CAR T cells per kg body weight). Rate of overall complete remission or complete remission with incomplete hematological recovery by central assessment was the primary endpoint. Secondary endpoints included duration of remission and relapse-free survival, overall survival, centralized minimal residual disease (MRD) negativity rate, and rate of allo-SCT. Patients undergoing new anticancer therapies (including allo-SCT were censored.

Between October 1, 2018, and October 9, 2019, 71 patients were enrolled and underwent leukapheresis. KTE-X19 was successfully manufactured for 65 (92%) patients and administered to 55 (77%). As of September 9, 2020, median follow-up was 16.4 months (IQR 13.8-19.6). The median age was 40 years (IQR 28-52), with eight patients (15%) aged 65 years or older. Twenty-six (47%) patients had received three or more previous therapies; 25 (45%) previously received blinatumomab, 12 (22%) previously received inotuzumab ozogamicin, and 23 (42%) previously received allo-SCT. Eighteen (33%) patients had primary refractory disease, 24 (44%) had relapsed or refractory disease post allo-SCT, and 43 (78%) had relapsed or refractory disease to two or more lines of systemic therapy. Bridging chemotherapy was received by 51 (93%) of patients; 34 (62%) had confirmed M3 bone marrow involvement (> 25% bone marrow blasts) after bridging chemotherapy.

The primary endpoint was met, with 39 patients (71%; 95% CI 57-82, p<0.0001) reaching complete remission or complete remission with incomplete hematological recovery by central assessment, of whom 31 (56%) had complete remission. Among the 39 patients with complete remission or complete remission with incomplete hematological recovery, median time to first complete remission or complete remission with incomplete hematological recovery was 1.1 months (IQR 1.0-1.9).

The secondary endpoint of MRD negativity rate was met by 42 (76%) of all treated patients having MRD negativity (p<0.0001); among responders, 38 (97%) of 39 had MRD negativity, and samples were unavailable for one patient. Ten (18%) patients received allo-SCT after KTE-X19 infusion, at the discretion of the treating physician. Median time to transplant was 98 days (IQR 72-134) following infusion.

The median duration of remission both with and without censoring patients at subsequent allo-SCT was 12.8 months (95% CI 8.7 – not estimable with censoring, 9-4 – not estimable without censoring. At data cutoff, 12 (31%) of the 39 patients with complete remission or complete remission with hematological recovery were in ongoing remission; nine (23%) proceeded to subsequent allo-SCT, five (13%) proceeded to other anticancer therapies, 12 (31%) relapse, and one (3%) died. Median relapse-free survival both with and without censoring at subsequent transplant was 11.6 months (2.7-15.5) in all treated patients and 14.2 months (11.6-not estimable) in responders. The relapse-free survival rate at 6 months was 58% (95% CI 43-70) and the overall survival rate at 12 months was 71% (95% CI 57-82). Rates of relapse-free survival at 6 months and of overall survival at 12 months were largely consistent among subgroups, including patients with at least 25% bone marrow blasts, Philadelphia chromosome-positive disease, previous allo-SCT, or previous blinatumomab. Median overall survival was 18.2 months (15.9 – not estimable) in all treated patients and was not reached in responders.

Cytokine release syndrome occurred in 49 (89%) patients with grade 3 or 4 CRS occurring in 13 (24%); no grade 5 CRS events occurred. Median time to CRS onset was 5 days (IQR 3-7) and median duration was 7.5 days (IQR 5-18). Neurological events occurred in 33 (60%) patients, with events of grade 3 of higher occurring in 14 patients (25%), including one grade 5 event (brain herniation). Median time to
onset was 9 days (IQR 7-11) and median duration was 7 days (IQR 4-19). Tocilizumab was administered to 44 (80%) patients, steroids were given to 41 (75%), and vasopressors to 22 (40%).

All patients with evaluable bone marrow samples (n=53) had confirmed baseline CD19 expression. Median time to peak CAR T-cell levels in blood after product infusion (n=50) was 15 days (IQR 11-16). CAR T-cells were no longer detectable by PCR in 22 (79%) of 28 patients with evaluable samples at 6 months. Twenty (36%) treated patients had died as of the data cutoff date, primarily from progressive disease.

Shah and colleagues concluded, in ZUMA-3 phase 2, KTE-X19 resulted in a high and durable response rate despite most patients having high disease burden and heavy pre-treatment, including novel agents, allo-SCT or both. Among the highest response rates were those observed in patients with one previous line of therapy (9 of 10 patients) and patients aged 65 and older (8 of 8 patients), suggesting that KTE-X19 might benefit certain subsets of patients, such as older patients who are often excluded form allo-SCT and tend to have poorer outcomes.

Brexucabtagene autoleucel (Tecartus®) is considered medically necessary for the treatment of adult patients (18 years and older) with relapsed or refractory B-cell precursor acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) when one of the following criteria are met:
- Has primary refractory disease
- Is in first relapse with remission of 12 months or less
- Relapsed or refractory after at least two previous lines of systemic chemotherapy
- Relapsed or refractory after allo-SCT

Optum believes facilities offering treatment with tisagenlecleucel, axicabtagene ciloleucel, brexucabtagene autoleucel, or Lisocabtagene maraleucel should be certified or in the process of obtaining certification in meeting Immune Effector Cell (IEC) standards by The Foundation for the Accreditation of Cellular Therapy (FACT).

Universal Contraindications

The following are considered contraindications to CAR T-cell therapy regardless of the product:
- Pregnancy
- Members receiving immunosuppressive therapy for an autoimmune disorder
- Any active, uncontrolled infection
- Uncontrolled Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection. These patients should be under the management of an HIV specialist and their disease controlled prior to CAR T-cell therapy.
- Hepatitis B or C infection
- Active graft vs. host disease in members with a history of allogeneic hematopoietic stem cell transplant
- Primary central nervous system lymphoma
- Solid tumors
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Non-covered Indications

In the absence of published evidence demonstrating efficacy, Optum considers the following uses of CAR T-cell therapy unproven:

- All indications not discussed above
- Second infusions of CAR T-cell therapy, regardless of product or indication

References


Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). Decision Memo for Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T-cell Therapy for Cancers (CAG-00451N); August 2019. Available at: Decision Memo for Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T-cell Therapy for Cancers (CAG-00451N) (cms.gov)


National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results Program. Follicular Lymphoma — Cancer Stat Facts

National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results Program. SEER Hematopoietic and Lymphoid Neoplasm Database (cancer.gov)


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<td>2.0</td>
<td>6/15/2021: Guideline reformatted and updated with literature review and the addition of idecabtagene vicleucel (Abecma) and the follicular lymphoma indication for axicabtagene ciloleucel (Yescarta). Reviewed by Optum Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplant Expert Panel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>7/8/2021: Reviewed and approved by Medical Technology Assessment Committee.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>7/12/2021: National Medical Care Management Committee advised of annual review.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>12/13/2021: National Medical Care Management Committee advised of interim update.</td>
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