

New AstraZeneca treatment for leukaemia approved for use in Scotland

The name AstraZeneca is now very familiar to all of us with the advent of the Covid-19 vaccine, and now the Scottish Medicines Consortium has approved the newest treatment which the company has developed.

In a first, the oral cancer therapy Calquence has been approved for use by NHS Scotland as a treatment for chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL).

This will be restricted use as a monotherapy for treating adults with untreated CLL and who are not eligible for other therapies.

Dr Mark Rafferty, Consultant Haematologist at the Beatson West of Scotland Cancer Centre, said: "The availability of acalabrutinib (Calquence) through NHS Scotland has the potential to improve disease outcomes for many patients with CLL. The need for effective, targeted treatments that can be taken at home is quite significant, particularly for those who are receiving therapy for the first time. Acalabrutinib is generally well-tolerated and today's announcement is exciting and hopeful news for the CLL community."

John Greensmyth, Trustee, CLL Support, said: "CLL is an

incurable blood cancer affecting hundreds of people across Scotland – patients who until a few years ago could only be treated with standard chemotherapy, which can be hard to tolerate. The availability of targeted oral drugs has expanded treatments options to CLL patients and with today’s announcement, many people will be able to access to a BTK inhibitor for the first time. This is a very welcome advance in disease management and I hope to see progress continue in the field of CLL and other blood cancers.”

