Interim Guidance for the use of Tocilizumab in the Management of Patients who have Severe COVID-19 with Suspected Hyperinflammation

This document is intended for use by healthcare professionals only.

This guidance is specific to the management of Patients with confirmed Severe COVID-19 with Suspected Hyperinflammation. While the guidance is intended to strengthen clinical management of these patients it does not replace clinical judgment or specialist consultation.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the National HSE Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Guidance for Possible or Confirmed COVID-19.

Key changes to version 4 of Interim Guidance for the use of Tocilizumab in the Management of Patients who have Severe COVID-19 with Suspected Hyperinflammation are highlighted throughout the text.

Protocol: Interim Guidance for the use of Tocilizumab in the Management of Patients who have Severe COVID-19 with Suspected Hyperinflammation

Published: 20 Mar 2020
Update Published: 29 Apr 2020
Review: 31 May 2020
Version number: 4

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Summary statement regarding the use of tocilizumab in the management of patients who have severe COVID-19 with suspected hyperinflammation

A formal Evidence Review has been conducted to assess the potential efficacy of tocilizumab in COVID-19. The evidence presented here is current as of 10th April 2020. This is a rapidly evolving area with emerging evidence accruing on a continual basis. Data from real world experience and associated updated evidence will be considered for inclusion in updated versions of this document.

1. Tocilizumab is an experimental medicine in the context of the management of severe COVID-19 disease. It must only be considered in patients with a care plan that includes a full range of critical care support and severe COVID-19 with suspected hyperinflammation. It must only be prescribed following multidisciplinary input and a consultant decision (see Treatment Criteria).

2. The use of investigational or off-label medicinal products to treat patients with confirmed COVID-19 is at an experimental stage. The evidence of clinical efficacy is lacking. Patients (or their next of kin, by phone) should be adequately informed about the uncertain efficacy, and respective toxicities of the agents, and their consent obtained. Treatment should be initiated in the context of an ethically approved clinical trial wherever possible. A list of clinical trials with ethical and regulatory approval in Ireland is available on the National Research Ethics Committee website: https://www.hrb.ie/covid-19-ethical-review/nrec-covid-19-overview/.

3. Cytokine release syndrome (CRS), also termed hyperinflammation\(^1\), is a complication of COVID-19 and is associated with high morbidity.

4. Early identification of hyperinflammation in COVID-19 patients is essential. Serial monitoring of ferritin, C-Reactive Protein, fibrinogen, D-dimers and other inflammatory markers may identify hyperinflammation and allow early intervention. Significant elevations of C-Reactive Protein, D-Dimers and Ferritin correlate with increased levels of IL-6 and poor outcome in patients with severe COVID-19 infection.

5. The evidence continues to emerge for the use of tocilizumab in this setting and therefore every effort should be made to collect relevant clinical outcomes (e.g. WHO Core Outcomes and suggested safety outcome measures, Appendix 1). Each hospital should have a designated a member of staff to co-ordinate tocilizumab prescription and registry data.

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\(^1\) Note: The terms CRS and hyperinflammation are used interchangeably in this document.

Patient selection (with input from specialist multidisciplinary team)²,³

Clinical judgment will be required for all cases; treatment with tocilizumab must only be initiated following specialist consultation with local critical care medicine, haematology, infection specialists and consultant of record.

Guidance for use of IL6 inhibitor tocilizumab in severe-COVID19 with suspected hyperinflammation (RoActemra® 20mg/ml)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment Criteria</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Treatment must only be initiated after consultant-level discussion in a multidisciplinary setting that includes critical care medicine, haematology, infection specialists and consultant of record. Treatment should be initiated in the context of an ethically approved clinical trial wherever possible. AND</td>
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</table>
| 2.                 | Hospitalised with confirmed COVID-19 pneumonia evidenced with X-ray or CT scan AND ≥1 of the following:  
- Blood oxygen saturation ≤93% AND/OR  
- PaO₂/FiO₂ ratio <300mmHg (SaO₂/FiO₂ ratio may be used if PaO₂/FiO₂ unavailable; an SaO₂/FiO₂ ratio <330mmHg is equivalent to a PaO₂/FiO₂ ratio <300mmHg) AND |
| 3.                 | Established presence of hyperinflammation: assessment and serial monitoring of ferritin, C-Reactive Protein, fibrinogen, D-dimers and other inflammatory markers. Significant elevations of C-Reactive Protein, D-Dimers and Ferritin correlate with increased levels of IL-6 and poor outcome in patients with severe COVID-19 infection. AND |
| 4.                 | Exclusion of acute severe infection from sources other than SARS-CoV2. |

| Recommended dose | Data continues to emerge on dosing in COVID-19; the following recommendations are adopted from China’s National Health Commission treatment guidelines\(^5\) and The University of Michigan Inpatient Guidance for diagnosis & treatment of COVID-19 in adults & children\(^3\):

Recommended dosing in adults (Specialist Paediatric advice required for patients aged under 18 years old):
- 8mg/kg (maximum 800mg per dose) as a single intravenous infusion. Dose rounding to the nearest whole vial is recommended. Vial sizes available may include 80mg, 200mg, and 400mg.
- In exceptional circumstances, one additional dose may be considered 8-12 hours later if clinical symptoms worsen or there is no improvement. The decision to administer a second dose must only be made following Consultant-level multidisciplinary specialist input (see Treatment Criteria section). A maximum of 2 doses per course in severe COVID-19 is recommended; subject to drug access.

For infusion details see Route and method of administration section below.
**Note:** The dose indicated for the management of Chimeric Antigen Receptor T-cell (CAR-T) related CRS is higher than has been used in practice for the treatment of hyperinflammation in severe COVID19. The dose in CAR-T related CRS is 8mg/kg (12 mg/kg in patients <30 kg). Dose may be repeated every 8 hours for up to three doses in a 24-hour period. Maximum of 4 doses total over the entire course of CRS.

| Contraindications | Hypersensitivity to the active substance or to any of the excipients.
- Acute, severe infections.
- NB Decisions in critically ill patients must involve multidisciplinary input; treatment must only be initiated following Consultant-level multidisciplinary specialist input (see Treatment Criteria section). Where patients have additional co-morbidities which may negatively impact on the outcome careful consideration should be given to whether tocilizumab should be used.

| Serial Monitoring | Serial monitoring of the following parameters is recommended:
- Full Blood Count
- *Ferritin
- *C-Reactive Protein
- *Fibrinogen
- *D-dimers
- *Increasing levels may be indicative of hyperinflammation

Assessment and serial monitoring of pro-inflammatory markers, including IL-6 (if available), may support the diagnosis of hyperinflammation. Procalcitonin if available, to help outrule bacterial superinfection.

Patients with severe or life-threatening CRS frequently have cytopenias or elevated ALT or AST due to the CRS.

| Side effects | Most common adverse reactions (incidence of at least 5%): upper respiratory tract infections, nasopharyngitis, headache, hypertension, increased ALT, injection site reactions. Transient or intermittent mild and moderate elevations of hepatic transaminases have been reported commonly with tocilizumab treatment. See Summary of Product Characteristics (SmPC) for full list of side effects; available from: [https://www.medicines.ie/medicines/roactemra-20-mg-ml-concentrate-for-solution-for-infusion-33648/smcp](https://www.medicines.ie/medicines/roactemra-20-mg-ml-concentrate-for-solution-for-infusion-33648/smcp). Healthcare Professionals are asked to report any suspected adverse reactions via Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) Pharmacovigilance: [www.hpра.ie](http://www.hpра.ie).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hepatic impairment</th>
<th>The safety and efficacy of tocilizumab has not been studied in patients with hepatic impairment. The marketing authorisation holder cannot advise on any dose adjustments.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warnings</td>
<td>Risk of serious infection: Increased risk of serious infection including tuberculosis (TB), bacterial, invasive fungal, viral, and other opportunistic infections have occurred in patients receiving tocilizumab.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drug</td>
<td>Tocilizumab (RoActemra *) 20 mg/mL concentrate for solution for infusion. Store vials in a refrigerator (2°C–8°C)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Licence</td>
<td>Unlicensed for the management of patients who have severe COVID-19 with suspected hyperinflammation. Tocilizumab is licensed for the management of cytokine release syndrome following treatment with CAR-T and also in the management of rheumatoid arthritis.</td>
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</table>
| Route and method of administration | Patients ≥30kg  
Withdraw a volume of sterile, non-pyrogenic sodium chloride 9 mg/mL (0.9%) solution for injection from a 100 mL infusion bag, equal to the volume of Tocilizumab concentrate required for the patient’s dose, under aseptic conditions. The required amount of Tocilizumab concentrate (0.4 mL/kg) should be withdrawn from the vial and placed in the 100 mL infusion bag. This should be a final volume of 100 mL. To mix the solution, gently invert the infusion bag to avoid foaming. Administer by intravenous (I.V.) infusion over 60 minutes. |
Appendix 1 – Suggested Outcome Measures for Patients Treated Outside of a Clinical Trial

Reports continue to emerge suggesting tocilizumab may have a role in the management of severe COVID-19 with suspected hyperinflammation. In the absence of the drug being administered in a formal clinical trial, the following proposed outcomes should be considered:


<table>
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<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Measure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Viral burden</td>
<td>COVID-19 semiquantitative viral RNA measured by qPCR cycle threshold (Ct) in nasopharyngeal or throat swab, sputum, or upper of lower respiratory secretions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Survival</td>
<td>All-cause mortality at hospital discharge or 60 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clinical progression</td>
<td>WHO Clinical Progression Scale, measured daily over course of study</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Suggested Safety Outcome Measures:**

Any Serious Adverse Event believed with a reasonable probability to be due to tocilizumab treatment, including, but not limited to:

- Secondary opportunistic infection, out of keeping with clinical disease
- Severe thrombocytopenia, out of keeping with clinical disease
- Severe neutropenia, out of keeping with clinical disease
- Increase in LFTs to 5x upper limit of normal
- Gastrointestinal perforation
- Allergic reactions, including anaphylactic reactions and angioedema