

CADTH COMMON DRUG REVIEW

Patient Input

**bictegravir/emtricitabine/tenofovir alafenamide
(Biktarvy)**

(Gilead Sciences Canada, Inc.)

Indication: HIV-1 infection

CADTH received patient input from:

Canadian Treatment Action Council (CTAC)

May 22, 2018

Disclaimer: The views expressed in each submission are those of the submitting organization or individual; not necessarily the views of CADTH or of other organizations.

While CADTH formats the patient input submissions for posting, it does not edit the content of the submissions.

CADTH does use reasonable care to prevent disclosure of personal information in posted material; however, it is ultimately the submitter's responsibility to ensure no personal information is included in the submission. The name of the submitting patient group and all conflict of interest information are included in the posted patient group submission; however, the name of the author, including the name of an individual patient or caregiver submitting the patient input, are not posted.

1. About Your Patient Group

The Canadian Treatment Action Council (CTAC) is Canada's national non-governmental organization addressing access to treatment, care and support for people living with HIV and hepatitis C. CTAC's organizational goals are to meaningfully engage community members, service providers, policymakers and other relevant stakeholders to identify, develop, and implement policy and program solutions. CTAC understands that treatment access should be considered in its holistic form, encompassing the range of treatment, care and support needs required to reach the most successful treatment experience possible for people living with HIV and/or viral hepatitis co-infection. Full CTAC membership is reserved for: a) individual people living with HIV (including HCV co-infection); b) organizations, groups or projects with a substantial HIV mandate (including HCV co-infection). Associate CTAC membership is open to any individual, organization, group or project that supports CTAC's mandate and objectives

Website: <http://www.ctac.ca/>

2. Information Gathering

On May 17, 2018, CTAC delivered a patient input consultation workshop in Toronto that provided an overview of the Common Drug Review patient input process and key findings from the bicitgravir/emtricitabine/tenofovir alafenamide clinical trials. Rounak Khan (Community Engagement Specialist at CTAC), and Amanda Fletcher (Policy Researcher at CTAC) delivered the consultation workshop. People living with HIV were invited to participate to the workshop. We also recognize that CDR patient input submissions are much stronger if the voice of people who have had (or believe themselves to have had) experience with the new therapy under consideration are included. As such, we attempted to invite those to the workshop those who had experience with any of the components within this 3-drug combination, or the new combination itself.

In total, six participants attended the workshop. CTAC has compiled data from all six workshop participants. All of the respondents identified themselves as HIV-positive. Four participants identified as male. Two participants identified as female. Two participants were in their 40's, three participants were in their 50's, while the remaining participant was in their 60's. All participants are on treatment for HIV. The number of years in treatment varied from 18 years to approx. 34 years. In addition to the results of this survey, survey data collected for a patient submission on dolutegravir, and dolutegravir rilpivirine have been used to inform and support this patient submission.

3. Disease Experience

HIV is a serious, life-threatening illness that threatens the immune system. Over time, if left untreated, HIV can compromise a person's immune system to the point that the body may no longer be able to fight off opportunistic infections. As of 2014, 75,500 Canadians are living with HIV (Public Health Agency of Canada). Access, administration of and adherence to highly active antiretroviral treatment (HAART) can control the progression of a person's HIV. In most cases, people taking HAART achieve an undetectable viral load (or viral suppression), the point at which there is so little HIV in the bloodstream (<50 copies/mL) that it cannot be detected by conventional medical technologies. Viral suppression is linked to marked improvement in long-term health outcomes and drastically reduces the possibility of transmitting HIV to sexual partners.

While achieving and maintaining an undetectable viral load via HAART means HIV-positive people can live long lives and manage their HIV as a chronic illness, people living with HIV experience the effects of "accelerated aging". According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) HIV/AIDS surveillance data from 1985 to 2010, people with HIV are living longer, where more than 35% are aged 50 or older. As people living with HIV are aging, they are also more susceptible to

inflammation and non-infectious co-morbidities, including bone fractures and renal failure, at earlier ages. From the literature, co-morbidities, such as kidney, liver, and cardiovascular disease, are more common in people living with HIV than the general population. Increased risk of experiencing co-morbidities is due to several risk factors, including co-infection and antiretroviral treatments themselves. In a study, people living with HIV between ages 41-50 are 16 times more likely than the general population to develop renal failure, and 46 times more likely to develop renal failure when over 60 years of age. When considering bone fracture risk, HIV+ people between the ages 40-60 are 12-16 times more at risk than those uninfected with HIV (Guaraldi G, et al. Outcomes Res. 2013 Sep 23;5:481-8).

As a chronic illness, HIV can present a number of complications, and these can vary from day to day and from patient to patient. At CTAC, we know that many people living with HIV experience negative mental health outcomes, either as side effects from treatment, or from facing stigma, discrimination, and related stress. One participant explained how stigma affected both his care and his sense of place in his community, saying, *“My quality of life has improved, but there’s still stigma, especially from family members. I learned to hide my HIV medications.”* Another participant from our dolutegravir rilpivirine survey noted that there are also issues with stigma in the medical community, *“Local doctors feel ill-equipped to treat HIV due to inexperience because of low patient caseloads with the condition. Stigma also play into it I think. Unless they’re familiar, doctors still see HIV as something more difficult to live with than it actually is.”* Another participant from our dolutegravir rilpivirine survey discussed the challenge of managing HIV while residing in a rural area, *“I live in a rural area and have to travel about 100 km. each way for my doctor’s appointments. I only see my doctor about every six months. Obviously if I had to travel that far more often it would be a challenge. For those who don’t have the support of family this could definitely be an obstacle.”*

In 2011, the Canadian AIDS Society released a study that estimated a \$1.3 million total economic loss per Canadian living with HIV (analyzing statistics current through 2008). This includes a \$670,000 average loss per HIV-positive person in labour productivity and a \$380,000 average loss in quality of life. As a result of being on HIV treatment, many participants described noticeable improvements in their quality of life and ability to engage in daily activities. Discussing the overall impact of treatment on his life, one participant stated, *“Not only do I feel healthy, I know I am thanks to the HIV medication. Without it, I would be dead by now.”* When asked whether treatment had improved their quality of life another respondent answered, *“In 1995, the doctors said I had 2 months to live, and that I’d better get my affairs in order. Now I am healthy, and so grateful.”* Another participant noted that, *“Quality of life has improved because I am not as fatigued as previously.”*

Many people living with HIV experience intersecting vulnerabilities conditioned by the social determinants of health – the social and structural conditions in which people are born, live, work and age, shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at the local, national and international levels. The following stories from respondents reflect the substantial impact that the social determinants of health, particularly employment and the accessing of public health benefits, have had on managing their HIV:

“My challenges are not treatment related, but more about how I am treated because I work periodically and I access Trillium. The Trillium plan is a barrier for people who work part time or periodically. Aids organizations and the government itself often assume that people will go onto ODSF or have private drug plans.” [respondent from dolutegravir rilpivirine survey]

“I had an excellent job, which came with an excellent health plan where the best HIV medications available were covered. I was so, so thankful for that. I think it made all the difference when I was diagnosed and first started treatment. I know that there are many who aren’t so lucky.”

As a result, HIV is a complicated illness that requires treatment options that can be tailored to individual needs, delivered in innovative capacities that bolster access to treatment, care and support, such as treatment outreach programs, low-threshold health care services, adherence programs and social supports.

4. Experiences With Currently Available Treatments

HIV is a complex illness and people living with HIV have varying responses to treatments that are currently available. Most people living with HIV are able to work with their physicians to find a therapeutic regimen that achieves viral suppression. However, some people living with HIV are not able to achieve viral suppression, despite trying multiple treatment regimens. Additionally, treatment adherence (taking medication when prescribed, as prescribed) is necessary for treatment to be effective; non-adherence can lead to drug class resistance, requiring the adoption of a new regimen selected from fewer available treatment options. As a result, having the maximum possible treatment options available is of clinical importance.

Findings from our survey indicate that from the six respondents who identified as living with HIV all are currently on treatment for their HIV. Their length of time on their current therapies was approximately 10 years for all participants, although minor changes have had to be made due to other health problems, or resistances that have developed. Considering our survey population was primarily made up of long-term survivors (ranging between 18 to 34 years), this result demonstrates that there is relative stability with the new generation of HIV medications, but individuals living with HIV will change their treatment regimen after advancements in medications, or due to other health complications. This emphasizes the significant need for the availability of several HIV treatments.

All respondents to the dolutegravir rilpivirine survey indicated current or past use of regimens containing darunavir, dolutegravir, emtricitabine, and/or tenofovir. This was much the same for those who participated in the bicitegravir/emtricitabine/tenofovir alafenamide patient input workshop. Treatments ran the gamut from Prezista to Intelence, Isentress, Norvir, and/or Atripla with different combinations of the above being utilized. Participants noted that their current treatment was effective at suppressing their viral load, but that there had been side effects associated with older treatments that were given when they were first diagnosed. One participant noted that, *“When I was first diagnosed, my doctor forced me onto AZT. AZT made me extremely sick. I became anemic and had extremely low energy. The side effects were so bad, that I wanted to discontinue treatment.”*

In the dolutegravir consultations, respondents highlighted a number of areas where they had, or could benefit from, caregiver support. They all noted substantial impact on caregivers looking after patients living with HIV. One respondent highlighted that the challenges his/her spouse faces in providing support is surrounding disclosure. According to the respondent, *“hiding from friends and some of our family members that I am HIV positive”* has been extremely difficult and hindered the ability to acquire a social safety net. Others noted staff time, funding, transportation and other associated costs as barriers to providing support and its impact on treatment adherence, mental health and other determinants of health. One respondent noted the challenges associated with lack of funding for direct support: *“we have to decrease our direct support services and in PEI there are very little services for PHA’s in many areas, including addictions, mental health, housing and food securing, which put treatment lower on the priority list”*. In addition, one respondent noted that difficulties understanding stigma and its impact, and navigating HIV-specific social services and institutional systems, including disability, insurance and mortgage, have presented specific challenges.

5. Improved Outcomes

Bicitegravir/emtricitabine/tenofovir alafenamide, is a novel, once-daily, fixed dose combination therapy featuring two drugs that are already on the Canadian market: emtricitabine and tenofovir alafenamide, along with a new drug, bicitegravir. The clinical trials for bicitegravir/emtricitabine/tenofovir alafenamide have shown that switching to this 3DR combination is associated with high HIV suppression rates, reduced renal impairment, and is effective for those with HBV or HCV co-infection. Also, the once-daily, fixed dose comes in the shape of a smaller pill, as compared to the pill size of other regimens currently on the market. These benefits were considered important for individuals managing lifetime use of HIV antiviral treatment. Many of the respondents expressed interest in this combination for benefits in terms of the smaller pill size, and the fact that this medication does not have to be taken with food. One participant noted that, *“I like the fact that this medication comes in a smaller pill form, I sometimes have difficulty swallowing my current medication. Having choice is exciting.”* Other participants, like this participant from our dolutegravir rilpivirine survey noted that, *“I don’t see replacing the*

"devil" I know with the "devil" I don't know - at least on a personal basis. If I had to make changes - and that time could come since I've been on the present regime for quite some time."

6. Experience With Drug Under Review

None of the respondents, to our survey, had experience with the single-dose, combination drug bicitgravir/emtricitabine/tenofovir alafenamide.

7. Anything Else?

CTAC continues to acknowledge and appreciate CADTH and CDEC suggestions as to how to improve patient input submissions, and is motivated to discuss revisions, reform, and refinements to the patient input process that can better represent the patient voice as well as improve the work of not only submitting organizations, but also the CDR as a whole.

Appendix: Patient Group Conflict of Interest Declaration

To maintain the objectivity and credibility of the CADTH CDR and pCODR programs, all participants in the drug review processes must disclose any real, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest. This Patient Group Conflict of Interest Declaration is required for participation. Declarations made do not negate or preclude the use of the patient group input. CADTH may contact your group with further questions, as needed.

1. Did you receive help from outside your patient group to complete this submission? If yes, please detail the help and who provided it.

CTAC did not receive help from outside our patient group to complete this submission

2. Did you receive help from outside your patient group to collect or analyze data used in this submission?

If yes, please detail the help and who provided it.

CTAC did not receive help from outside our patient group to collect or analyze data used in this submission

3. List any companies or organizations that have provided your group with financial payment over the past two years AND who may have direct or indirect interest in the drug under review.

Company	Check Appropriate Dollar Range			
	\$0 to 5,000	\$5,001 to 10,000	\$10,001 to 50,000	In Excess of \$50,000
ViiV Healthcare				X

I hereby certify that I have the authority to disclose all relevant information with respect to any matter involving this patient group with a company, organization, or entity that may place this patient group in a real, potential, or perceived conflict of interest situation.

Name: Shelina Karmali

Position: Executive Director

Patient Group: CTAC

Date: January 17, 2018