



Background Information – Drugs & Biologics Compendium

National Comprehensive Cancer Network® (NCCN®)

NCCN is a not-for-profit alliance of 21 of the world's leading cancer centers. NCCN is dedicated to improving the quality and effectiveness of care provided to patients with cancer. Through the leadership and expertise of clinical professionals at NCCN Member Institutions, NCCN develops resources that present valuable information to physicians, pharmacists, patients and others. The primary goal of all NCCN initiatives is to improve the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of oncology practice so patients can live better lives.

NCCN Drugs & Biologics Compendium (NCCN Compendium™)

A compendium is a concise, comprehensive compilation of a body of [knowledge](#); it may summarize a larger work. A drug compendium lists the drugs relevant to one or more clinical areas and provides other, related information.

The NCCN Compendium is a convenient listing of recommended uses of drugs and biologics in cancer care. The NCCN Compendium recommendations are derived directly from the NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines in Oncology (see below for information on the NCCN Guidelines). Each recommendation is designated with a Category of Evidence that reflects the quality of evidence and consensus on which the recommendation is based (see below for Categories of Evidence and Consensus).

Although other drug compendia also address cancer care, the NCCN Compendium is widely considered the most comprehensive and up-to-date oncology drug compendium available. The NCCN Compendium is important in the context of cancer care because it is widely used as the basis for coverage policy. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Aetna, UnitedHealthcare and other managed care organizations utilize the NCCN Compendium as an authoritative reference for oncology coverage policy. It is most often used by managed care medical directors, pharmacy benefits directors and other health care professionals when making decisions that impact patient access to appropriate therapy.

Note: Although NCCN Guidelines are free of charge, a paid subscription is required to access the NCCN Compendium.

NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines in Oncology™ (NCCN Guidelines™)

NCCN Guidelines are a comprehensive set of treatment algorithms across the continuum of cancer care (from diagnosis to end of life) that support treatment decision making between physicians and patients. They address all treatment modalities, including chemotherapy, radiation therapy, surgery and palliative care. Guidelines can be accessed at NCCN's professional website, NCCN.org. Guidelines are available to all free of charge, but registration and login is required.

To date, several NCCN Guidelines have been translated into versions for patients and other non-clinicians. Patient Guidelines can be accessed free of charge at NCCN's consumer website, NCCN.com; no registration is required. Additional patient versions of NCCN Guidelines will be made available in the future.

NCCN Guidelines are developed through an ongoing process by 44 panels of experts from NCCN member institutions. Guidelines are updated based on review of clinical evidence (e.g., published reports of clinical trials) and expert consensus regarding what constitutes appropriate care. Guideline panels include physician experts in relevant fields (oncologists, surgeons, radiation oncologists and others) and may also include patient advocates, nurses or others. Each guideline panel meets at least annually, and meets more often if important new evidence becomes available. Each recommendation in the NCCN Guidelines is identified with a category of evidence that reflects the quality of evidence available and the level of consensus (see Categories of Evidence, below). Footnotes link to citations in the medical literature and other important information.

Recommendations are defined for each step in the clinical decision making process; one treatment or a range of treatment options may be included for a specific situation. Guidelines are applicable to most but not all cancers. NCCN Guidelines cover about 98% of cancers, but do not cover rare cancers or pediatric conditions.

NCCN Categories of Evidence and Consensus

Category 1: The recommendation is based on high level evidence (e.g., randomized controlled trials) and there is uniform NCCN consensus.

Category 2A: The recommendation is based on lower level evidence* and there is uniform NCCN consensus.

Category 2B: The recommendation is based on lower level evidence* and there is near-uniform consensus on the recommendation.

Category 3: The recommendation is based on any level of evidence but reflects major disagreement

** Smaller randomized clinical trials, well-designed controlled trials without randomization, well-designed cohort studies*