BAVENCIO® (avelumab) becomes the first treatment for rare skin cancer metastatic Merkel Cell Carcinoma (mMCC) to be licensed for use in the UK

- Avelumab is the first and only immunotherapy drug licensed for the treatment of mMCC in the UK
- The launch of avelumab marks a step-change in the way that mMCC, a rare and aggressive skin cancer, can be treated
- Until now, the only treatment option for mMCC has been chemotherapy, which has limited efficacy\(^1,2,3\) and is not generally well-tolerated by people with mMCC\(^1,2,4\)

Feltham, (Merck) & Walton Oaks (Pfizer), 23\(^\text{rd}\) October 2017 - Merck & Pfizer today announced the UK launch of BAVENCIO® (avelumab) solution for infusion 20 mg/mL, as a monotherapy for the treatment of mMCC in adults.\(^5\) Avelumab is the first medicine to be licensed for this rare, aggressive type of skin cancer.\(^5\)

“The licensing of avelumuab in this disease is an advance for patients as it is well tolerated, and active,” commented Professor Ruth Plummer, Consultant Medical Oncologist at the Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. “Patients with mMCC are often elderly and find our standard chemotherapy hard going, needing dose reductions or breaks from treatment.”

The incidence of mMCC is so low that it is hard to be accurate, however it is thought that there are approximately 50 new cases of mMCC annually in the UK.\(^6,7\) However, data show that the incidence of MCC is rising\(^6,8\) possibly due to an ageing population or increased UV exposure.\(^8\) MCC exhibits aggressive clinical features, including frequent lymph node involvement and early metastases.\(^9,10,11\) Patients with mMCC have a very poor prognosis, with fewer than half of patients surviving more than one year and fewer than 20\% surviving beyond five years.\(^12\)
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While earlier-stage MCC can be generally managed with surgery and radiotherapy, treatment options for mMCC are severely limited. Until now, there have been no licensed medicines to treat mMCC in the UK. As such, the standard of care for patients with mMCC is to enrol in clinical trials.

The efficacy and safety of avelumab was demonstrated in the JAVELIN Merkel 200 trial, an international, multi-centre, single-arm, open-label, Phase II study with two parts (still ongoing):

- Part A included 88 patients with mMCC whose disease had progressed after at least one chemotherapy treatment. The objective response rate was 33%, with 11% of patients experiencing a complete response and 22% of patients experiencing a partial response. Responses were noted at the time of the first post-baseline tumour assessment (week 7) in 22 (76%) of 29 patients. At the time of analysis, tumour responses were durable, with 93% of responses lasting at least 6 months (n=25) and 71% of responses lasting at least 12 months (n=13). The overall survival rate at 6 months was 69% (n=43).
- Part B (still enrolling), at the time of the data cut-off (March 2017), included 39 patients with histologically confirmed mMCC who were treatment-naïve to systemic therapy in the metastatic setting. The objective response rate was 62%, with 14% of patients experiencing a complete response (CR) and 48% of patients experiencing a partial response (PR). 16 of 18 confirmed responses (88.9%) occurred approximately 6 weeks after treatment initiation.
- Avelumab was well tolerated in line with the overall safety database. Most AEs related to treatment were low grade, including all infusion reactions.

“We’re really encouraged by the news that avelumab is now licensed for use in the UK,” commented Catherine Bouvier, CEO of the NET Patient Foundation. “Although rare, mMCC is an aggressive cancer with potentially worse outcomes than other types of skin cancer such as melanoma. An effective, well-tolerated treatment option will be welcomed with open arms by patients with mMCC and their families, so we hope that all stakeholders will work in a collaborative way to ensure that patients in the UK now have access to it as quickly as possible.”
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“Today is a significant milestone for the Alliance between Merck and Pfizer,” commented Dr Belinda Byrne, Medical Director at Merck, UK. “It demonstrates our commitment to working in partnership to develop new treatment options for patients with hard-to-treat cancers and we are looking forward to exploring future potential monotherapy indications and a diverse range of novel combinations with avelumab.”

In June 2016, avelumab was awarded orphan drug designation for the treatment of mMCC by the European Medicines Agency. In July 2017, avelumab was awarded a Promising Innovative Medicine (PIM) designation by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). On 20th September 2017, avelumab received marketing authorisation in the 28 countries of the European Union (EU) in addition to Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is due to publish Technology Appraisal Guidance on avelumab in April 2018.

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Notes to Editors

About metastatic Merkel Cell Carcinoma (mMCC)
Metastatic MCC is a rare and aggressive disease in which cancer cells form in the top layer of the skin, close to nerve endings. Merkel Cell Carcinoma (MCC), which is also known as neuroendocrine carcinoma of the skin or trabecular cancer, often starts in those areas of skin that are most often exposed to the sun, including the head and neck, and arms. Risk factors for MCC include sun exposure and infection with Merkel cell polyomavirus. Caucasian males older than 50 are at increased risk. MCC is often misdiagnosed as other skin cancers and grows at an exponential rate on chronically sun-damaged skin. Current treatment options for MCC include surgery, radiation and chemotherapy. Treatment for metastatic or Stage IV MCC is generally palliative.

About BAVENCIO® (avelumab)
BAVENCIO® (avelumab) is a human antibody specific for a protein called PD-L1, or programmed death ligand-1. Avelumab is designed to potentially engage both the adaptive and innate immune systems. By binding to PD-L1, avelumab is thought to prevent tumor cells from using PD-L1 for protection against white blood cells, such as T cells, exposing them to anti-tumor responses. Avelumab has been shown to induce antibody-dependent cell-mediated cytotoxicity (ADCC) in vitro. In November 2014, Merck and Pfizer announced a strategic alliance to co-develop and co-commercialize avelumab. For more information, please see the avelumab Summary of Product Characteristics.

About the Merck-Pfizer Alliance
Immuno-oncology is a top priority for Merck and Pfizer Inc. The global strategic alliance between Merck and Pfizer enables the companies to benefit from each other’s strengths and capabilities and further explore the therapeutic potential of avelumab, an anti-PD-L1 antibody initially discovered and developed by Merck. The immuno-oncology alliance will jointly develop and commercialise avelumab and advance Pfizer’s PD-1 antibody. The alliance is focused on developing high-priority international clinical programs to investigate avelumab as a monotherapy, as well as in combination regimens, and is striving to find new ways to treat cancer.
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**About Merck**
Merck is a leading science and technology company in healthcare, life science and performance materials. Around 50,000 employees work to further develop technologies that improve and enhance life – from biopharmaceutical therapies to treat cancer or multiple sclerosis, cutting-edge systems for scientific research and production, to liquid crystals for smartphones and LCD televisions. In 2016, Merck generated sales of € 15.0 billion in 66 countries.

Founded in 1668, Merck is the world's oldest pharmaceutical and chemical company. The founding family remains the majority owner of the publicly listed corporate group. Merck, Darmstadt, Germany holds the global rights to the “Merck” name and brand except in the United States and Canada, where the company operates as EMD Serono, MilliporeSigma and EMD Performance Materials.

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At Pfizer, we apply science and our global resources to bring therapies to people that extend and significantly improve their lives. We strive to set the standard for quality, safety and value in the discovery, development and manufacture of healthcare products. Our global portfolio includes medicines and vaccines as well as many of the world's best-known consumer healthcare products. Every day, Pfizer colleagues work across developed and emerging markets to advance wellness, prevention, treatments and cures that challenge the most feared diseases of our time. Consistent with our responsibility as one of the world's premier innovative biopharmaceutical companies, we collaborate with healthcare providers, governments and local communities to support and expand access to reliable, affordable health care around the world. For more information, please visit us at: www.pfizer.co.uk.
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