

Medicines Management Programme

Best-value biological medicine:

**Tocilizumab on the High Tech
Arrangement**

Review of submission for Avtozma®

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List of Abbreviations

AIDMP	Access & Integration Drug Management Programme
BVB	Best-value biological
BVM	Best-value medicines
CPU	Corporate Pharmaceutical Unit
EMA	European Medicines Agency
EPAR	European public assessment report
EU	European Union
HMA	Heads of Medicines Agencies
HPRA	Health Products Regulatory Authority
HSE	Health Service Executive
INN	International non-proprietary name
mg	Milligrams
mL	Millilitres
mm	Millimetres
MMP	Medicines Management Programme
PCRS	Primary Care Reimbursement Service
PIL	Patient information leaflet
PFP	Pre-filled pen
PFS	Pre-filled syringe
PK	Pharmacokinetic
RA	Rheumatoid arthritis
SFI	Solution for injection
SmPC	Summary of Product Characteristics
TEAE	Treatment-emergent adverse event
VAT	Value-added tax

1. Executive Summary

The Health Service Executive (HSE)-Medicines Management Programme (MMP) aims to promote safe, effective and cost-effective prescribing of biological medicines, including biosimilar medicines. The MMP recognises the potential savings arising from the availability of biosimilars. These savings, however, can only be realised by increased utilisation of best-value biological (BVB) medicines or best-value medicines (BVM), including biosimilars.

The MMP published a report on 13 November 2025 in which it recommended Tyenne[®] as the BVB medicine for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement.¹

The MMP has completed an evaluation of a submission received from Celltrion Healthcare Ireland Limited for designation of their biosimilar medicine containing tocilizumab (Avtozma[®]) as a BVB medicine for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement. The MMP considers **Avtozma[®]** to be comparable to the BVB medicine for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement. The MMP recommends that BVB medicine status be assigned to **Avtozma[®]**.

The MMP recommends the following as BVB medicines for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement:

- ✓ Avtozma® (Celltrion Healthcare Ireland Limited)
- ✓ Tyenne® (Fresenius Kabi Ireland).

Clinicians should give due consideration to prescribing Avtozma® or Tyenne® when issuing a prescription for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement.

Prescribing the recommended BVB medicines reduces the financial burden on the HSE arising out of the funding of reimbursed medicines, and can assist in facilitating access to new, innovative medicines for patients.



Initiation

When initiating a patient on tocilizumab, the clinician should prescribe Avtozma® or Tyenne®.



Switching

Patients currently on tocilizumab should be considered for switching to Avtozma® or Tyenne® at the earliest possible opportunity.

2. Background

2.1 Best-Value Biological Medicines - Tocilizumab

The MMP published a report on 13 November 2025 in which it recommended Tyenne[®] as the BVB medicine for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement.¹

2.2 Biosimilar medicines

A biosimilar medicine containing tocilizumab 162 milligrams (mg) in self-administered injection devices, Tyenne[®], is available on the HSE Reimbursement List, for prescribing and supply on the High Tech Arrangement, since December 2023.²

Celltrion Healthcare Ireland Limited have submitted a formal pricing and reimbursement application to the HSE for addition of the pre-filled pen (PFP) and pre-filled syringe (PFS) presentations of their biosimilar medicine containing tocilizumab 162 mg solution for injection (SFI), Avtozma[®], to the HSE Reimbursement List, for prescribing and supply on the High Tech Arrangement.

For both Avtozma[®] and Tyenne[®], the reference biological medicine is RoActemra[®].^{3,4}

2.3 HSE-Primary Care Reimbursement Service Request

The Corporate Pharmaceutical Unit (CPU) of the HSE-Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) requested Celltrion Healthcare Ireland Limited to submit a dossier to the MMP, to enable the MMP to undertake an evaluation of their biosimilar medicine containing tocilizumab, Avtozma[®], for designation as a BVB medicine for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement.

3. Scope

The presentations of Avtozma[®] for which Celltrion Healthcare Ireland Limited have provided a submission are considered to be aligned with the scope of the original BVB medicine evaluation process for tocilizumab (November 2025) as:

- they have a marketing authorisation that allows for supply in Ireland, and
- they are the subject of a formal pricing and reimbursement application submitted to the CPU for addition to the HSE Reimbursement List, and
- a submission has been received from the marketing authorisation holder/supplier.

4. Definitions

For the purposes of this document, the reimbursement price refers to the reimbursement price of the medicinal product as listed in the HSE Reimbursement List maintained by the PCRS. It may not

represent the final acquisition cost to the HSE of the medicinal product, which may also include any rebates and commercial-in-confidence arrangements that are in place. The reimbursement price is exclusive of value-added tax (VAT), which is applicable to medicinal products containing tocilizumab.

All prices and costs are correct as of 13 April 2026.

5. Evaluation process

The review of the submission received from Celltrion Healthcare Ireland Limited was carried out in accordance with the evaluation process in the *MMP roadmap for the prescribing of best-value biological (BVB) medicines*.⁵

In line with the *MMP Roadmap for the prescribing of best-value biological (BVB) medicines*, the MMP considered the following criteria when reviewing the submission received from Celltrion Healthcare Ireland Limited:⁵

1. Acquisition cost
2. Therapeutic indications
3. Formulation considerations
4. Product range including pack sizes and strengths available
5. Product stability including storage requirements
6. Administration devices
7. Patient factors
8. Expenditure in the therapeutic area and potential for cost efficiencies
9. Clinical guidelines
10. Security of supply to the Irish Market
11. Utilisation and clinical experience with the biological medicine
12. Any other relevant factors with respect to the particular international non-proprietary name (INN).

6. Evaluation

6.1 Acquisition cost

The proposed reimbursement price of Avtozma[®] 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS is €432.00 per pack, as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1 Proposed reimbursement price of Avtozma[®] on the High Tech Arrangement⁶

Medicinal Product	Reimbursement Price per pack*
Avtozma [®] 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS	€432.00

mg: milligrams; PFP: pre-filled pen; PFS: pre-filled syringe; SFI: solution for injection

*Each pack contains four PFP/PFS

Clause 8.2.2 of the Framework Agreement on the Supply and Pricing of Generic, Biosimilar and Hybrid Medicines (2021) states that the price that a supplier shall submit to the HSE of a new biosimilar medicine for which an application is made for its addition to the reimbursement list shall be no greater than 55% of the 1st of October 2021 price of the equivalent branded original medicine.⁷ The proposed reimbursement price of Avtozma[®] 162 mg PFP/PFS is in line with this requirement.

The submission received from Celltrion Healthcare Ireland Limited included revised commercial terms for Avtozma[®], resulting in a significant reduction in the acquisition cost to the HSE.⁶

Recommendation

The acquisition cost of Avtozma[®] (Celltrion Healthcare Ireland Limited) falls within the range for designation as a BVB medicine for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement, based on the proposed commercial terms included in the submission received from Celltrion Healthcare Ireland Limited.

6.2 Therapeutic indications

Table 2 summarises the licensed therapeutic indications of Avtozma[®] 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS and compares them with the licensed indications of the reference medicine, RoActemra[®] 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS, and the BVB medicine for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement, Tyenne[®] 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS.

Table 2 Summary of licensed therapeutic indications for Avtozma® 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS, RoActemra® 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS and Tyenne® 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS

Medicinal Product	Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) in adults		Systemic Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis		Polyarticular Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis		Giant Cell Arteritis in adults
	Severe, active and progressive RA	Moderate-to-severe active RA	Patients aged 1 year and older	Patients aged 12 years and older	Patients aged 2 years and older	Patients aged 12 years and older	
Avtozma® 162 mg SFI PFP ³	✓	✓		✓*		✓*	✓
Avtozma® 162 mg SFI PFS ³	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
RoActemra® 162 mg SFI PFP ⁸	✓	✓		✓*		✓*	✓
RoActemra® 162 mg SFI PFS ⁸	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Tyenne® 162 mg SFI PFP ⁴	✓	✓		✓*		✓*	✓
Tyenne® 162 mg SFI PFS ⁴	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓

mg: milligrams; PFP: pre-filled pen; PFS: pre-filled syringe; RA: rheumatoid arthritis; SFI: solution for injection

*Avtozma® 162 mg SFI PFP, RoActemra® 162 mg SFI PFP and Tyenne® 162 mg SFI PFP should not be used to treat paediatric patients < 12 years of age as there is a potential risk of intramuscular injection due to thinner subcutaneous layer.

Please refer to the relevant Summary of Product Characteristics for full prescribing information.

Avtozma® 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS are licensed for the same therapeutic indications as the PFP/PFS presentations of the reference biological medicine, RoActemra®. The summary of product characteristics (SmPCs) of the PFP/PFS presentations of the reference biological medicine, RoActemra® and the biosimilar medicine, Avtozma®, contain the same statements in relation to the therapeutic dosage for each of the licensed therapeutic indications for tocilizumab.^{3,8}

Recommendation

In relation to the criterion of therapeutic indications, the MMP is of the opinion that Avtozma® 162 mg is equivalent to the reference medicine, RoActemra® 162 mg. Avtozma® is licensed for all of the therapeutic indications that the MMP BVB medicine for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement is licensed for.

6.3 Formulation considerations

Avtozma® 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS is formulated as a clear to slightly opalescent, colourless to yellow solution. It contains the following excipients:³

- L-Histidine
- L-Histidine monohydrochloride monohydrate
- L-Threonine
- L-Methionine
- polysorbate 80
- water for injections.

Each Avtozma® 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS contains 162 mg of tocilizumab in 0.9 millilitres (mL); the concentration of tocilizumab is 180 mg/mL.³

In terms of excipients with known effects, Avtozma® 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS does not contain sodium. It contains polysorbate 80.³

Injection site reactions are reported as a very common ($\geq 1/10$) adverse reaction under general disorders and administration site conditions in the section on undesirable effects in the SmPC of RoActemra® 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS. Further detail is also provided in the SmPC of the injection site reactions that were reported in the relevant clinical trials for each of the indications for which RoActemra® 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS is licensed. The injection site reactions reported in the clinical trials

included erythema, haematoma, pruritus, pain and swelling, and were mild-to-moderate in severity. None of the reported injection site reactions necessitated drug discontinuation.⁸

The SmPC for Avtozma[®] 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS includes the same information as RoActemra[®] 162 mg PFP/PFS in relation to administration site conditions and injection site reactions.³

6.3.1 European Public Assessment Report – Avtozma[®]

In the clinical safety section of the European Public Assessment Report (EPAR) for Avtozma[®], an overview of the adverse drug reactions for the trials involving subcutaneous administration of tocilizumab is provided, i.e. the pivotal pharmacokinetic (PK) equivalence phase I study (CT-P47 1.1), the comparative PK and safety phase I study (CT-P47 1.3) and the usability phase III study (CT-P47 3.2).⁹

The PK study CT-P47 1.1, comparing Avtozma[®] and European Union (EU)-licensed RoActemra[®], was conducted in two parts. In part 1, an injection site reaction was reported for one (7.1%) subject in the Avtozma[®] arm. In part 2, injection site reactions were reported for four (2.8%) and five (3.6%) subjects in the Avtozma[®] and EU-licensed RoActemra[®] arms, respectively. Across both parts of the study, no serious injection site reactions were reported and all of the subjects recovered from the event.⁹

In study CT-P47 1.3, comparing the PFP and PFS presentations of Avtozma[®], treatment-emergent adverse events (TEAEs) classified as injection site reactions were reported for 14 (9.2%) and 5 (3.2%) subjects in the PFP and PFS groups, respectively. All injection site reactions were grade one or two in intensity. No serious injection site reactions were reported and all of the subjects recovered from the event. The higher proportion of subjects developing injection site reactions in the PFP group compared to the PFS group was ascribed to administration technique, and was not considered clinically concerning.⁹

In the usability study CT-P47 3.2, TEAEs classified as injection site reactions were reported for three (9.1%) patients. All injection site reactions were grade one or two in intensity. The most frequently reported signs and symptoms of injection site reaction were injection site erythema and injection site pruritus (two [6.1%] patients for each).⁹

The EPAR notes that the overall adverse event profiles were comparable between Avtozma® and RoActemra® in both the healthy volunteer and rheumatoid arthritis (RA) studies. It also notes that a high proportion of the reported adverse events in the subcutaneous studies were injection site reactions, which is not in itself unexpected. Overall, the EPAR states that the data submitted supports the biosimilarity of Avtozma® and EU-licensed RoActemra® from a safety perspective.⁹

Recommendation

In relation to the criterion of formulation considerations, the MMP is of the opinion that there is no robust evidence available that differentiates any of the biological medicines containing tocilizumab. Avtozma® 162 mg is therefore considered comparable to the BVB medicine for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement for this criterion.

6.4 Product range including pack sizes and strengths available

The BVB medicine for tocilizumab, Tyenne®, is available on the HSE Reimbursement List in both a single-use PFP and PFS presentation containing 162 mg of tocilizumab, with one pack containing four PFP/PFS. Celltrion Healthcare Ireland Limited have indicated in their submission that they have submitted a pricing and reimbursement application for addition of single-use PFP and PFS presentations of Avtozma®, containing 162 mg of tocilizumab, to the HSE Reimbursement List, for prescribing and supply on the High Tech Arrangement. Each pack of Avtozma® contains four PFP/PFS.

Avtozma® is also available in 4 mL, 10 mL and 20 mL vials containing 20 mg/mL concentrate for solution for infusion.³ This presentation of Avtozma® is supplied and administered in the hospital setting. Celltrion Healthcare Ireland Limited have not applied for addition of this presentation of Avtozma® to the HSE Reimbursement List, for prescribing and supply on the High Tech Arrangement; it therefore falls outside the scope of this BVB medicine evaluation process.

Recommendation

In relation to the criterion of product range, the MMP is of the opinion that Avtozma® 162 mg provides a similar offering when compared to the BVB medicine for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement.

6.5 Product stability including storage requirements

Tyenne 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS has a shelf life of three years.⁴ Avtozma® 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS has a shelf life of four years.³ Both medicinal products must be stored in a refrigerator between 2°C and 8°C, and should not be frozen.^{3,4}

Tyenne® 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS can be stored at room temperature (up to 30°C) for a single period of up to 14 days. The PFP/PFS must be protected from light during this 14-day period, and discarded if not used within the 14-day period or by the original expiry date, whichever is earlier.⁴ Once removed from the refrigerator, Avtozma® 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS can be stored for up to three weeks at or below a temperature of 30°C. The PFP/PFS must be discarded if not used within the three-week period. If necessary, the PFP/PFS may be returned to the refrigerator once within these three weeks and stored in a refrigerator between 2°C and 8°C until the expiry date.³

Both Avtozma® 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS and Tyenne® 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS should be kept in the outer carton of the packaging in order to protect from light. For both Avtozma® and Tyenne®, the PFP/PFS should not be shaken.^{3,4}

Prior to administration, Tyenne® SFI 162 mg PFP/PFS should be allowed to reach room temperature after removing from the refrigerator, by waiting for at least 30 minutes (PFS) or 45 minutes (PFP) before injecting. After removing the cap, the injection must be started right away, to prevent the medicine from drying out and blocking the needle. If the injection is not used right away after removing the cap, it should be disposed of in an appropriate manner and a new PFP/PFS should be used.⁴ Prior to administration, Avtozma® SFI 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS should be allowed to reach room temperature (18°C to 28°C) after removing from the refrigerator, by waiting for 30 minutes (PFS) or 45 minutes (PFP), before injecting. After removing the cap, the injection must be started within three (PFP) or five (PFS) minutes, to prevent the medicine from drying out and blocking the needle. If the injection is not used within three (PFP) or five (PFS) minutes of removing the cap, it should be disposed of in an appropriate manner and a new PFP/PFS should be used.³

Recommendation

In relation to the criterion of product stability, the MMP is of the opinion that Avtozma® 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS is comparable to the BVB medicine for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement in terms of product stability, including storage requirements.

6.6 Administration devices

The BVB medicine for tocilizumab, Tyenne[®], is available on the HSE Reimbursement List, for prescribing and supply on the High Tech Arrangement, in both a single-use PFP and PFS that delivers 162 mg of tocilizumab. Avtozma[®] is also available in both a single-use PFP and PFS that delivers 162 mg of tocilizumab.

Table 3 provides a summary of various properties for the administration devices of the BVB medicine for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement, and for Avtozma[®] 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS.

Table 3 Characteristics of administration devices for the BVB medicine for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement (Tyenne[®]) and Avtozma[®] 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS

	Avtozma [®]	Tyenne [®]
Needle gauge†	PFP: 26	PFP: 27
	PFS: 26	PFS: 27
Needle length (mm)	PFP: 12.7	PFP: 12.7
	PFS: 12.7	PFS: 12.7
Safety feature	PFP: Yes	PFP: Yes
	PFS: Yes	PFS: Yes

mm: millimetres; PFP: pre-filled pen; PFS: pre-filled syringe

†A higher needle gauge is indicative of a smaller bore size for the needle, i.e. a thinner needle

6.6.1 Pre-filled pen

From examination of the patient information leaflets (PILs), SmPCs and submission for the PFP presentation of Avtozma[®], there appears to be little difference compared with the administration device of the BVB medicine for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement, Tyenne[®].

The PFP presentation of Avtozma[®] consists of a 0.9 mL solution for injection in a PFS (type 1 glass), with a staked-in needle, containing 162 mg of tocilizumab assembled into a PFP. The syringe is closed by a rigid needle shield (polyisoprene rubber and polypropylene) and a sterile fluorotecoated elastomeric plunger stopper (with silicone). The PFP presentation has a 26-gauge needle, with a needle length of 12.7 millimetres (mm). Avtozma[®] PFP does not contain latex.^{3,6}

The PFP presentation of Tyenne[®] consists of a 0.9 mL solution for injection in a PFS (type 1 glass) with a staked stainless steel needle with a latex-free needle cap, a plunger stopper (bromobutyl)

rubber), containing 162 mg of tocilizumab assembled into a PFP. The PFP presentation has a 27-gauge needle, with a needle length of 12.7 mm.^{1,4}

The PFP presentations of Avtozma[®] and Tyenne[®] both use small gauge needles (26 and 27 gauge, respectively), with the small differences unlikely to cause a difference in practice.

Both Avtozma[®] PFP and Tyenne[®] PFP have button-free delivery, with delivery of the dose of tocilizumab commencing when the user pushes the pen firmly down against their skin. Both of the PFPs have various mechanisms to indicate to the user that the delivery of the injection has commenced, and to signify when it is completed. These include the sounding of a click when the injection has started and finished, and a coloured indicator window to show the progress and completion of the delivery of the dose of tocilizumab. Both PFP presentations have a safety feature to guard the needle upon delivery of the dose of tocilizumab; once the PFP is lifted away from the skin, a needle shield covers the needle.^{3,4}

The PILs contain instructions for the administration of a subcutaneous dose of tocilizumab from the PFP presentations of Avtozma[®] and Tyenne[®]. In both cases, the instructions are presented in the form of text with accompanying pictograms.^{3,4}

6.6.2 Pre-filled syringe

From examination of the PILs, SmPCs and submission for the PFS presentation of Avtozma[®], there appears to be little difference compared with the administration device of the BVB medicine for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement, Tyenne[®].

The PFS presentation of Avtozma[®] consists of a 0.9 mL solution for injection containing 162 mg of tocilizumab in a PFS (type 1 glass), with a staked-in needle. The syringe is closed by a rigid needle shield (polyisoprene rubber and polypropylene) and a sterile fluorotec-coated elastomeric plunger stopper (with silicone). The PFS presentation of Avtozma[®] has a 26-gauge needle, with a needle length of 12.7 mm. Avtozma[®] PFS does not contain latex.^{3,6}

The PFS presentation of Tyenne[®] consists of a 0.9 mL solution for injection containing 162 mg of tocilizumab in a PFS (type 1 glass) with a staked stainless steel needle with a latex-free needle cap, a plunger stopper (bromobutyl rubber) and extended finger flanges. The PFS presentation has a 27-gauge needle, with a needle length of 12.7 mm.^{1,4}

The PFS presentations of Avtozma® and Tyenne® both use small gauge needles (26 and 27 gauge, respectively), with the small differences unlikely to cause a difference in practice.

Both PFS presentations have a safety feature to guard the needle upon delivery of the dose of tocilizumab, with a passive needle guard system in place, i.e. upon release of the plunger having administered the dose, the entire needle is drawn back automatically and covered by the needle safety guard.^{3,4}

The PILs contain instructions for the administration of a subcutaneous dose of tocilizumab from the PFS presentations of Avtozma® and Tyenne®. In both cases, the instructions are presented in the form of text with accompanying pictograms.^{3,4}

Recommendation

In relation to the criterion of administration devices, the MMP is of the opinion that Avtozma® 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS provides a similar offering to the MMP BVB medicine for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement.

6.7 Patient factors

Celltrion Healthcare Ireland Limited outlined the services that are available to patients when they are prescribed their biosimilar medicine containing tocilizumab 162 mg.⁶

A literature review was undertaken to investigate the impact of the provision of patient support programmes on treatment with tocilizumab. No robust evidence was identified by the MMP in relation to the impact of patient support programmes on treatment with tocilizumab.

The patient support programme that is available to patients who are prescribed Avtozma® is similar in nature to those available to patients who are prescribed the BVB medicine for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement, based on the information received from Celltrion Healthcare Ireland Limited.⁶

Recommendation

In relation to the criterion of patient factors, the MMP is of the opinion that the patient support programme offered by Celltrion Healthcare Ireland Limited for Avtozma® is similar in nature to that offered by the marketing authorisation holder of the BVB medicine for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement.

6.8 Expenditure in the therapeutic area and potential for cost savings

Total annual expenditureⁱ on tocilizumab increased from €2.26 million in 2015 to €19.6 million in 2023.¹⁰ There was a notable reduction in expenditure in 2024 (to €13.9 million) due to the implementation of relevant clauses of the Framework Agreement on the Supply and Pricing of Medicines and the Framework Agreement on the Supply and Pricing of Generic, Biosimilar and Hybrid Medicines.¹⁰ Tocilizumab was ranked 11th in terms of the total number of prescription claims paid (19,276) on the High Tech Arrangement in 2023.¹¹

The Framework Agreement on the Supply and Pricing of Generic, Biosimilar and Hybrid Medicines (2021) contains a clause in relation to the pricing of biosimilar medicines that is relevant to biosimilar medicines containing tocilizumab. Clause 8.2.2 states that the price that a supplier shall submit to the HSE of a new biosimilar medicine for which an application is made for its addition to the reimbursement list shall be no greater than 55% of the price of the equivalent branded original medicine as of 1 October 2021.⁷ This clause applied in the case of the application for the pricing and reimbursement of Avtozma[®] 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS that was submitted by Celltrion Healthcare Ireland Limited.

The proposed reimbursement price of Avtozma[®] 162 mg SFI PFP/PFS is outlined in Table 1. The submission received from Celltrion Healthcare Ireland Limited included revised commercial terms for Avtozma[®], resulting in a significant reduction in the acquisition cost to the HSE.

Recommendation

In relation to the criterion of expenditure in the therapeutic area and potential for cost savings, the MMP is of the opinion that the acquisition cost to the HSE for Avtozma[®] falls within the range for designation as a BVB medicine for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement.

6.9 Clinical guidelines

There are currently no relevant national clinical guidelines available in Ireland for the therapeutic areas or conditions for which the PFP/PFS presentations of medicinal products containing tocilizumab are indicated, i.e. rheumatology.

The HSE-Access & Integration Drug Management Programme (AIDMP) has published guidance for biological and biosimilar medicine use in acute hospitals (version 2, May 2024). The guidance states

ⁱ Expenditure reflects the ingredient cost of the medicinal product, exclusive of value-added tax and fees.

that for a biological medicine with a biosimilar available for the same licensed indication, the medicine offering the better value should be prescribed. It also recommends that:¹²

- all treatment-naïve patients should be initiated on the better-value medicine (whether biosimilar or reference medicine)
- all non-treatment-naïve patients currently on treatment with the reference medicine should be considered for a switch to a biosimilar if the biosimilar is better value compared to the originator or reference medicine.

The guidance highlights that the availability of biosimilar medicines brings competition to the pharmaceutical market, presenting an opportunity for significant improvement in value for patients and healthcare providers.¹²

Recommendation

In relation to the criterion of clinical guidelines, no relevant information was identified by the MMP.

6.10 Security of supply to the Irish Market

Celltrion Healthcare Ireland Limited outlined the processes that they have in place for supply of Avtozma® to the Irish market. They outlined the arrangements that they have in place for the supply chain management of Avtozma®, including the distribution models that they employ.⁶

They also outlined the arrangements that they have in place to ensure sufficient supply of Avtozma® to the Irish market.

Recommendation

In relation to the criterion of security of supply to the Irish market, the MMP is of the opinion that Celltrion Healthcare Ireland Limited have provided evidence of their capacity to meet the ongoing needs of Irish patients with respect to the supply of Avtozma®.

6.11 Utilisation and clinical experience with the biological medicine

There is significant clinical experience with the use of tocilizumab in the Irish setting, with approximately 2,000 patients in receipt of a medicinal product containing tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement on a monthly basis.¹⁰ In September 2023, Tyenne® was the first biosimilar medicine containing tocilizumab to receive a marketing authorisation from the European Commission, following consideration of a marketing authorisation application via the European Medicines Agency (EMA) centralised procedure.⁴ Avtozma® was licensed as a biosimilar medicine of

tocilizumab by the European Commission on 14 February 2025, following consideration of a marketing authorisation application via the EMA centralised procedure.³

The MMP published a report on 13 November 2025 in which it identified a BVB for tocilizumab; **Tyenne**[®].¹ In February 2026, approximately 16% of individual in receipt of a medicinal product containing tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement were in receipt of the BVB medicine, Tyenne[®].¹⁰

Manufacturers of biosimilars must perform an extensive head-to-head comparability with the reference medicine and demonstrate to regulators that they have similar quality, safety and efficacy to the reference medicine such that there are no clinically meaningful differences between the two.^{13,14} The EMA and Heads of Medicines Agencies (HMA), in a joint statement, have confirmed that biosimilar medicines approved in the EU are interchangeable with their reference medicine or with an equivalent biosimilar. Interchangeability in this context means that the reference medicine can be replaced by a biosimilar without a patient experiencing any changes in the clinical effect.¹⁵

Biosimilars of tocilizumab have only recently become available, with data indicating that they are being incorporated into clinical practice in Ireland.¹⁰ Other European healthcare systems have observed higher rates of uptake of biosimilar medicines containing tocilizumab than those achieved in Ireland to date. This demonstrates that clinical experience is being obtained for biosimilar medicines of tocilizumab within a short timeframe.

Tocilizumab is predominately prescribed in the speciality of rheumatology. The MMP has previously recommended BVB medicines for adalimumab and etanercept; both of these biological medicines are used in the treatment of conditions in the speciality of rheumatology. Since May 2019, over 25,000 patients have been initiated on, or switched to a biosimilar medicine for adalimumab or etanercept that has been recommended as a BVB medicine, by prescribers in the speciality of rheumatology.¹⁶ This demonstrates that significant experience has being obtained with biosimilar medicines in the speciality of rheumatology.

Recommendation

Overall, in relation to the criterion of utilisation and clinical experience with the biological medicine, given that Avtozma[®] has been deemed to be a biosimilar medicine of the reference biological

medicine RoActemra[®], the MMP is of the opinion that it provides a similar offering to the BVB medicine for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement.

6.12 Any other relevant factors with respect to the particular INN

Celltrion Healthcare Ireland Limited submitted information on their biosimilar pipeline under this criterion.

The MMP is of the opinion that no new relevant material was submitted under this criterion that had not been considered under any of the other criteria.

6.12.1 Position papers

No new published position papers on the usage of biosimilars, either in general or specifically in relation to tocilizumab, were identified from the Irish clinical societies for the specialities for which tocilizumab is prescribed (i.e. Irish Society of Rheumatology), since the publication of the initial MMP BVB medicine evaluation report in November 2025.

6.12.2 Legislation/Guidance from Medicines Regulators

The MMP reviewed the legislation and guidelines from medicines regulators that relate to the prescribing and utilisation of biosimilar medicines. Pharmacist-led substitution of biological medicines is not permitted under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013.¹⁷

The Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) published an updated version of their Guide to Biosimilars for Healthcare Professionals in September 2025. This guide defines interchangeability as “the possibility of exchanging one medicine with another that is expected to have the same clinical effect. This could mean replacing a reference medicine with a biosimilar (or vice versa), or replacing one biosimilar with another”. The guide states that, once approved, biosimilars can be used interchangeably with the reference medicine, or with biosimilars of that reference medicine.¹⁴

The EMA and HMA, in a joint statement issued on 19 September 2022, have confirmed that biosimilar medicines approved in the EU are interchangeable with their reference medicine or with an equivalent biosimilar. Interchangeability in this context means that the reference medicine can be replaced by a biosimilar without a patient experiencing any changes in the clinical effect.¹⁵

Recommendation

In relation to the criterion of any other relevant factors with respect to the particular INN, the MMP is of the opinion that no new relevant material was submitted under this criterion that had not been considered under any of the other criteria.

Overall Recommendation

The MMP considers Avtozma[®] to be comparable to the BVB medicine for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement. The MMP recommends that Avtozma[®] (Celltrion Healthcare Ireland Limited) is designated a BVB medicine for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement.

7. MMP Recommendations – April 2026

The MMP recommends the following as BVB medicines for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement:

- ✓ Avtozma® (Celltrion Healthcare Ireland Limited)
- ✓ Tyenne® (Fresenius Kabi Ireland).

Clinicians should give due consideration to prescribing Avtozma® or Tyenne® when issuing a prescription for tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement.

Prescribing the recommended BVB medicines reduces the financial burden on the HSE arising out of the funding of reimbursed medicines, and can assist in facilitating access to new, innovative medicines for patients.



Initiation

When initiating a patient on tocilizumab, the clinician should prescribe Avtozma® or Tyenne®.



Switching

Patients currently on tocilizumab should be considered for switching to Avtozma® or Tyenne® at the earliest possible opportunity.

The MMP recommends that all new patients being initiated on tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement should be prescribed a BVB medicine; Avtozma® or Tyenne®. Patients currently receiving tocilizumab on the High Tech Arrangement should be considered for switching to a BVB medicine (Avtozma® or Tyenne®) at the earliest possible opportunity.

8. References

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