AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF JOINT WORKING BETWEEN

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AND

AstraZeneca UK Limited,

AND

Prescribing Services Ltd, Norfolk Clinical Park, Buxton, Norwich, NR10 5RH

relating to

(Project EMBRACE Severe Asthma: **E**mpowering **M**edical **B**est **P**ractice **R**eviews **A**ssuring **C**linical **E**xcellence)

All parties have contributed resources to this initiative. The project will run from May 2024 to May 2025.

SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

Severe asthma is a defined subset of asthma, with increased risk of exacerbations, reduced quality of life, increased co-morbidities associated with oral corticosteroids (OCS), and healthcare resource utilisation (HCRU)[1,2,3]. Severe asthma affects 3–5% [4]of all patients with asthma; however, it disproportionately contributes to ~50% of the total cost burden of asthma[3].

Specialised care and treatment for severe asthma can improve outcomes for patients; specifically, NICE-approved biological therapies as add-on treatments for patients with severe uncontrolled asthma are therapeutic advancements that have demonstrated clinical improvements in patient outcomes, including exacerbation reduction, OCS reduction, improved lung function and improved quality of life.

Despite the existence of specialised commissioned services to manage severe asthma and deliver biologic treatments where appropriate, currently wait times are on average 63 weeks from referral to treatment [5]and only 1 in 5 patients eligible for a biologic[6], are receiving treatment. This level of uptake is among the worst in Europe[7] and has been described as a postcode lottery by Asthma and Lung UK.[8]

For the above reasons, there has been a clear mandate from the NHS to improve access to severe asthma care and treatment for patients with severe uncontrolled asthma. Most recently, the Accelerated Access Collaborative[9] has embarked on the rapid uptake programme, specifically focused on improving access to the aforementioned medicines; however, various challenges still exist across the pathway preventing optimal and equitable access to care.

1. Asthma UK. 75% of people with severe asthma need regular emergency care, new Asthma UK survey finds. Available from: https://www.biospace.com/article/releases/75-percent-of-people-with-severe-asthma-need-regular-emergency-care-new-b-asthma-uk-b-survey-finds-/ (Accessed September 2023)
2. Price DB, et al. J Asthma Allergy 2018;11:193–204
3. Nunes C, et al. Asthma Res Pract 2017;3:1
4. Asthma UK – Severe Asthma report – Slipping through the net: The reality facing patients with difficult and severe asthma. 2018
5. Rupani H, et al. Poster presented at the British Thoracic Society Winter Meeting, 23-25 November 2022 (A159)
6. Ryan D, et al. J Allergy Clin Immunol Pract 2021;9:1612–1623
7. Logex Healthcare Analytics. International Medicines Uptake Comparator. Available from: https://logex.com/uk/international-medicines-uptake-comparator/ [last accessed September 2023]

8. https://pharmaceutical-journal.com/article/news/basic-asthma-care-comes-down-to-postcode-lottery-asthma-uk-survey-finds [last accessed September 2023]
9. https://www.oxfordahsn.org/our-work/respiratory/asthma-biologics-toolkit/aac-consensus-pathway-for-management-of-uncontrolled-asthma-in-adults/ [last accessed September 2023]

Project EMBRACE – Severe Asthma: Empowering Medical Best Practice Reviews Assuring Clinical Excellence is new collaboration between the NHS, the pharmaceutical company **AstraZeneca, and Prescribing Services Limited (PSL)**. The aim of this project is to implement the system at an ICB level, utilising 'virtual hubs' in which – in line with the latest evidence, those patients with suspected Severe Asthma, identified as having both the greatest potential for improvement in treatment and being at significant risk of further complication and acute hospital admissions will be targeted.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To ensure equitable and timely access for patients with severe asthma across an ICB population, to appropriate expert care and specialised treatment through proactive patient identification, engagement and triage solutions

Objective 1

Develop a digitally enabled pathway to efficiently identify, risk-stratify, and triage patients with severe asthma to specialised care

Objective 2

Deploy this pathway at a ICB level to demonstrate an improvement in quality metrics, including, but not limited to:

- Overall time to appropriate severe asthma care
- Overall time to appropriate initiation of biologic treatment
- Projected patient outcomes including exacerbations, oral steroid use and HCRU
- Number and proportion of eligible patients receiving a severe asthma biologic treatment

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

Patient benefits

- Timely diagnosis and referral to specialised severe asthma centre
- Reduction in exacerbations and improvement in disease control
- Reduction in use of OCS
- Reduction in total time spent interacting with or travelling to healthcare in healthcare system
- Improved speed and access to care
- Improvement in health inequality metrics e.g. access and quality of care for deprived groups

NHS benefits

- Improvement in health quality metrics e.g time to diagnosis, time to treatment, number of eligible patients receiving appropriate biological therapies
- Reduction in hospitalisations and healthcare resource utilisation
- Improvement in health inequality metrics e.g. access and quality of care for deprived groups

AstraZeneca

- Achieving our company values in putting patients first
- Delivering against AstraZeneca UKs medical missions of accelerating the pathway to specialist care in severe asthma
- Increased number of eligible patients receiving NHS approved biological therapy means that use of AZ medicines may increase *(note – the Joint Working Agreement is not dependent on AZ medicines, and prescription will remain with the clinician and wider MDT)*
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- Enhancing AstraZeneca's corporate reputation and trust with the NHS and patients
- A successful project with proven outcome measures will allow the Project Board to share best practice across the UK

Prescribing Services Ltd

- Involvement in a project that facilitates better identification and treatment for this vulnerable patient group