



MEDIA RELEASE

CAR-T. HOW MUCH LONGER MUST CANADIANS WAIT

while some government programs seem to be aimed at increasing canada's capacity to innovate others undermine these initiatives.

montréal, november 4.2019– there are an ever growing number of therapeutic and diagnostic technologies being developed and coming to market in oncology. many of these have the potential to transform oncology. if these technologies can't get to patients they can't deliver on their promise. the federal government has made clear that innovation is a priority and provincial government's, like quebec have invested in life sciences and innovative technologies in healthcare.

one such innovative technology is CAR-T. the first pioneering CAR T-cell therapies represent a paradigm shift in the treatment of cancer and a breakthrough for some relapsed or refractory hematological malignancies, showing durable responses and potential for long-term disease control unrivaled by conventional therapy. the first car t-cell therapy received health canada approval in september 2018 and was recommended by CADTH and INESSS with conditions in January 2019. in october 2019, the québec government announced it would reimburse CAR-T, but still no agreement has been made by Cancer Care Ontario [CCO] to make CAR-T available to canadian patients. and access delays decrease the promise of the therapeutic value of CAR T, creating an interesting dichotomy between government's desire to cut costs but also undercutting the value simultaneously.

one of the major concerns of delivering car-t has been around site readiness, the complexity and uniqueness of car-t requires specialized centres to provide this therapy and expertise to manage the side effects. currently accredited sites to provide car-t cell [ste justine's hospital for children [montréal, QC], the centre hospitalier de l'universite de montréal [montréal, QC], sick kids [toronto, ON] and the juravinsky cancer centre [hamilton, ON]] are ready to start treating patients, but without a negotiated price or a formal agreement to list on provincial formularies [PLA], these centres are ready to go but without a therapy to offer.

the cancer collaborative advocates for responsible pricing, but limiting drug prices shouldn't come by limiting patients access to life saving therapies. especially when patients are being sent south of the border to receive car-t at almost double the cost.

there is a willingness on behalf of payors and decision makers to provide access to CAR T-cell therapies for paediatric and adult patients across canada in a way that is ethical, equitable but in order to make it meaningful for patients, there needs to be a better way to do this, and to expedite reimbursement so that car-t is available in canada

as continuous innovations happen in cancer care, the need to start thinking more responsibly about reimbursement and policies that promote innovation in canada while creating efficiency and value for stakeholders will be important as canada strives to seek a balance between innovation and sustainability.