Effects of TNF-alpha antagonists in people with rheumatoid arthritis

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Record Status
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Authors' objectives
This study aims to assess the effects of the TNF-alpha antagonists etanercept and infliximab compared with placebo on disease activity and functional outcomes in people with rheumatoid arthritis (RA).

Authors' conclusions
The quality of the trials identified is high and the studies are suggestive of a beneficial effect of TNF-alpha antagonists in patients with severe active RA that does not respond to conventional RA treatment. The specific effects on independence and overall mobility were not reported. Treatment was, however, associated with a significant improvement in measures of functional status such as global assessment, pain, duration of morning stiffness, and quality of life. Long-term effects on autoantibodies and serious infections remain to be evaluated. Treatment with these drugs incurs a high direct cost to the NHS. Cost-effectiveness studies included in this review provide an estimate of the costs per patient successfully treated with etanercept or the costs of TNF-alpha antagonists to the NHS, but they do not provide a conclusion as to whether or not the treatment is considered cost-effective.

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