

**SAVE YOUR SKIN FOUNDATION APPLAUDS HEALTH CANADA'S APPROVAL OF BAVENCIO™ (AVELUMAB FOR INJECTION) FOR THE TREATMENT OF METASTATIC MERKEL CELL CARCINOMA (MCC)**

***First Health Canada approved treatment for rare and aggressive type of skin cancer***

February 23, 2018 – VANCOUVER, BC – Health Canada has approved BAVENCIO™ (avelumab for injection) for the treatment of metastatic Merkel cell carcinoma (MCC) in previously treated adults. BAVENCIO is the first Health Canada approved treatment for patients with metastatic MCC, a rare and aggressive type of skin cancer.

“Canadians living with metastatic MCC are in urgent need of access to new therapeutic options to treat their aggressive disease – they simply don’t have the luxury of time,” says Kathy Barnard, Founder of Save Your Skin Foundation. “We applaud Health Canada’s approval of BAVENCIO, which provides new hope for patients and their loved ones.”

MCC is associated with very poor patient outcomes, particularly once the disease has metastasized. Roger Deckert is a patient from Edmonton, AB who is one of the 5 - 12 per cent of MCC patients in Canada who presented with metastatic disease at the time of diagnosis.

“When I was diagnosed in late 2014, I underwent two years of traditional treatments, as there were no other treatment options,” says Deckert. “I’m grateful for this approval and the new hope it’s given me for a brighter future with my family and friends. I applaud that this treatment is now available to other patients in Canada living with this debilitating disease.”

Oncologist Dr. John Walker, from the Cross Cancer Institute in Edmonton, AB says, “This approval represents an important breakthrough for metastatic MCC patients and their healthcare teams, who until now had no options beyond chemotherapy or enrolment in clinical trials.”

**About Merkel Cell Carcinoma**

Merkel cell carcinoma (MCC) is a rare and aggressive type of skin cancer. It is estimated that there are approximately 290 people in Canada with MCC. In MCC, malignant cells form in the top layer of the skin, close to the nerve endings that sense touch. It commonly appears as painless pink, red or purple bumps on the skin. They usually appear on areas of skin exposed to the sun, such as the face, neck, arms, and legs, but they can occur anywhere on the body. Sometimes the skin on the top of the tumour might break open and bleed. Once the cancer starts to metastasize, or spread, to other parts of the body, it becomes metastatic MCC. Fewer than 50 per cent of metastatic MCC patients will survive more than one year, and fewer than 20 per cent will survive beyond five years.

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