Canagliflozin, dapagliflozin and empagliflozin monotherapy for treating type 2 diabetes: systematic review and economic evaluation

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Declared competing interests of authors: David McGrane has spoken at educational meetings sponsored by AstraZeneca, Eli Lilly, Sanofi, MSD, Takeda Pharmaceutical Company, Novo Nordisk, Janssen, and has served on Advisory Boards for Eli Lilly, Sanofi, Novo Nordisk. J Paul O’Hare has received lecture fees, advisory board meeting fees, and grants for research from Novo Nordisk and Sanofi. All fees are paid through University of Warwick to fund access to insulin projects in sub-Saharan Africa.

Published January 2017
DOI: 10.3310/hta21020

Plain English summary

Canagliflozin, dapagliflozin and empagliflozin for type 2 diabetes
Health Technology Assessment 2017; Vol. 21: No. 2
DOI: 10.3310/hta21020

NIHR Journals Library www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk
Plain English summary

In type 2 diabetes, it is important to get blood glucose levels back down to as near normal as possible to reduce the risk of long-term complications such as damage to eyesight and kidneys. The flozins are the newest type of oral drugs. They work by increasing the amount of glucose lost in the urine, which leads to calorie loss and some weight loss. However, they are much more expensive than older drugs.

Treatments for diabetes may increase or decrease a patient’s weight. One of the main uncertainties is how large are any patient benefits from the direct impact of weight changes.

If a few kilograms gained or lost have little or no impact upon a patient’s day-to-day living, there are few if any patient benefits from the flozins and sitagliptin over the more traditional treatments of pioglitazone and sulfonylureas (SUs) such as gliclazide. The flozins and sitagliptin cost around £400 more each year than the traditional treatments. So in monotherapy compared with gliclazide, pioglitazone or repaglinide, the flozins represent poor value.

Not everyone can take the older drugs because of hypoglycaemia (with SUs) or risks of heart failure and fracture (with pioglitazone). If patients who would receive flozins would otherwise be treated with sitagliptin or similar drugs, the additional cost of the flozins is only around £40 more each year. This means that fewer treatments elsewhere need to be reduced to fund the flozins, and that the flozins are good value for patients as a whole.
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This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was commissioned and funded by the HTA programme on behalf of NICE as project number 13/177/01. The protocol was agreed in March 2015. The assessment report began editorial review in February 2016 and was accepted for publication in July 2016. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HTA editors and publisher have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors’ report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the draft document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HTA programme or the Department of Health. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HTA programme or the Department of Health.

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