In May 2003, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved Iressa® (gefitinib, Astra Zeneca) for treatment of patients with advanced or metastatic non-small-cell lung cancer (NSCLC) after failure of platinum-based and docetaxel chemotherapy. Iressa was given faster approval by the FDA since this drug is for a life threatening condition for which no other treatment options exist. Iressa is an oral pill that can be taken once a day. The most frequent side effects from Iressa include rash, acne, dry skin, nausea, and vomiting. Interstitial lung disease (ILD), which is characterized by difficulty breathing, cough, and low-grade fever, has been reported in patients on Iressa. The average wholesale price (AWP) of Iressa is $65 per tablet/day.

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States (US). It is estimated that about 157,000 deaths annually are due to lung cancer. NSCLC is the most common form and accounts for 80% of all lung cancer cases. NSCLC is almost always fatal, with 14% of patients surviving after 5 years. Only 17% to 30% of patients with advanced NSCLC respond to current combinations of chemotherapy treatments. Iressa should be used for the treatment of advanced lung cancer when patients have failed such chemotherapy treatments. The focus of this therapy is for life extension versus a curative therapy. In clinical trials, only 10.6% of patients experienced at least a 50% reduction in tumor size while receiving Iressa. This tumor shrinkage lasted for approximately 7 months. Patients received treatment with Iressa for about 2 months and survived for almost 7 months. The overall incidence of ILD in patients who have received Iressa has been about 1% in the United States. Approximately one third of patients who developed ILD died. Despite limited efficacy, safety and cost issues associated with Iressa, there are no other treatment options available for this select group of patients.

Iressa will be available from Caremark Specialty Pharmacy. Caremark Specialty Pharmacy will be providing Guideline Management for Iressa which will include:
• Verifying appropriate diagnosis
• Checking for failure of other therapies
• Recommending a 30-day supply of medication in order to assure patient response

For more information call your Caremark account representative.

Please Note: This document provides a brief overview of the subject. Please refer to the manufacturer's full prescribing information for a complete discussion of the product. This review is provided as a reference only, and is based in part on information derived from third parties.