



On Friday, November 18, 2011, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced that it would remove metastatic breast cancer from the label for Avastin (bevacizumab). This decision follows recommendations made in June by the FDA's Oncologic Drugs Advisory Committee. For more information about the decision, click here (<http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/ucm280533.htm>) to go to the FDA's questions and answers document.

The Cancer Support Community is disappointed that today there is one less FDA approved treatment available for women living with metastatic breast cancer, which can be a devastating diagnosis. We urge the FDA to renew their commitment to cancer patients and expedite treatments that will promise improved outcomes (even modest improvements), manageable side effects and other positive results.

As an organization that serves people affected by all types of cancer, CSC is pleased that Avastin continues to be approved in the treatment of certain kinds of advanced colon, kidney, lung and brain (glioblastoma) cancers.

CSC's President & CEO, Kim Thiboldeaux, noted "We encourage all people diagnosed with cancer to engage in a thoughtful discussion with their health care team to consider the benefits and risks of all available treatment. At CSC, we have learned a great deal from those we support, and we believe in the importance and value of an educated and empowered patient. Since people with cancer often feel stigmatized, alone, and overwhelmed with grief, they feel stronger and more hopeful when they have more treatment options available to them."

Although the FDA has revoked approval for Avastin, physicians can continue to prescribe the drug to treat metastatic breast cancer. This practice is called 'off label prescribing,' but the true challenge lies in payment for the drug. A spokesman for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services said "Medicare will continue to cover Avastin. CMS will monitor the issue and evaluate coverage options as a result of action by the FDA but has no immediate plans to change coverage policies." The Decision of the Commissioner also addresses insurance coverage issues, indicating that no change in Medicare coverage is anticipated. We do know that some insurance companies have already stopped paying for Avastin for metastatic breast cancer. CSC will continue to monitor decisions by other companies and any changes to Medicare coverage.

People with cancer and their loved ones can find support, resources and a caring community at [www.cancersupportcommunity.org](http://www.cancersupportcommunity.org). Visit us to find a center near you, to request educational materials or to join our online community.