



# Effective Health Care

## Maintenance Therapy in Treating Patients with Advanced Epithelial Carcinomas

### Nomination Summary Document

#### Results of Topic Selection Process & Next Steps

- Maintenance therapy in treating patients with advanced epithelial carcinomas (breast and ovarian cancers) will be considered for refinement as a systematic review. The scope of this topic, including populations, interventions, comparators, and outcomes, will be further developed in the refinement phase.
- When key questions have been drafted, they will be posted on the AHRQ Web site and open for public comment. To sign up for notification when this and other Effective Health Care (EHC) Program topics are posted for public comment, please go to <http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/index.cfm/join-the-email-list1/>.

#### Topic Description

**Nominator:** Organization

**Nomination Summary:** The nominator asks about the comparative risks and benefits of using maintenance therapy for adult patients with a variety of advanced cancers (e.g., breast cancer and ovarian cancer). The key issue is whether maintenance chemotherapy will improve survival by optimizing the window for tumor control or whether alternatively the outcome will be continued drug exposure and associated toxicity without benefit to the patient.

**Staff-Generated PICO:**

**Population(s):** Patients with advanced breast or ovarian carcinomas who have demonstrated response to first-line therapy

**Intervention(s):** Initiation of maintenance therapy immediately following first-line therapy and continued long term or until disease progression or withdrawal for toxicity, followed by second-line therapy upon progression

**Comparator(s):** Observation with best supportive care until disease progression, followed by second-line therapy upon progression

**Outcome(s):** Progression free survival, overall survival, drug toxicity, quality of life

**Key Questions from Nominator:**

1. Can continuation maintenance therapy\* be used to improve outcomes (progression free survival, overall survival, quality of life) in patients with advanced breast or ovarian cancers?
2. Can switch maintenance therapy\*\* be used to improve outcomes (progression free survival, overall survival, quality of life) in patients with advanced breast or ovarian

cancers?

\* Continuation of first line drug immediately following successful treatment using first-line drug regimen

\*\* Continuation of new non cross reacting drug immediately following successful treatment using first-line drug regimen

## Considerations

- The topic meets all EHC Program selection criteria. (For more information, see <http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/index.cfm/submit-a-suggestion-for-research/how-are-research-topics-chosen/>.)
- There is currently a lack of consensus regarding the timing for initiating maintenance therapy in patients with advanced epithelial carcinomas. Maintenance therapy is sometimes initiated in patients who have achieved partial remission, complete remission, or have non-progressing disease. Because of this, defining the appropriate population for maintenance therapy is an important question. A review on this topic may also consider the correlation between progression free survival and both overall survival and quality of life.