

CADTH Reimbursement Review

# CADTH Reimbursement Recommendation

(Draft)

Faricimab (Vabysmo)

Indication: for the treatment of Diabetic macular edema  
(DME)

Sponsor: Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd.

Recommendation: Reimburse with Conditions

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## Recommendation

The CADTH Canadian Drug Expert Committee (CDEC) recommends that faricimab be reimbursed for the treatment of diabetic macular edema (DME) only if the conditions listed in Table 1 are met.

## Rationale for the Recommendation

Two randomized, double-blind, active-controlled, phase III trials (YOSEMITE, N = 940; RHINE, N = 951) demonstrated that faricimab administered at every 8 weeks (Q8W) or personalized treatment interval (PTI) dosing was non-inferior to aflibercept Q8W in the change in best corrected visual acuity (BCVA) from baseline averaged over weeks 48, 52, and 56 of treatment in adult patients with DME. In the YOSEMITE trial, the mean difference between the faricimab and aflibercept groups was -0.2 Early Treatment Diabetic Retinopathy Study (ETDRS) letters (97.5% confidence interval [CI], -2.0 to 1.6) and 0.7 ETDRS letters (97.5% CI, -1.1 to 2.5) for faricimab Q8W and faricimab PTI arms, respectively. In the RHINE trial, the mean difference of change was 1.5 ETDRS letters (97.5% CI, -0.1 to 3.2) and 0.5 ETDRS letters (97.5% CI, -1.1 to 2.1) for faricimab Q8W and faricimab PTI arms respectively, compared to aflibercept. While most patients reported satisfaction with current intravitreal treatments for DME, they expressed a need for new treatments for DME that are effective, safe, and will result in fewer injections. The majority (78.1%) of patients randomized to faricimab PTI group received faricimab at an extended interval of every 12 weeks (Q12W) or every 16 weeks (Q16W) at week 96 in the YOSEMITE and RHINE trials.

Using the sponsor submitted price for faricimab and publicly listed prices for all other drug costs, the incremental cost-effectiveness ratio (ICER) for faricimab was \$164,743 per quality-adjusted life-year (QALY) compared with bevacizumab; all other comparators were associated with fewer QALYs and greater costs relative to faricimab. This analysis assumes that faricimab is associated with lower administration frequency and similar clinical efficacy relative to all comparators. Given that there is uncertainty regarding the frequency of injections and the comparative effectiveness data, there is insufficient evidence to justify a higher cost for faricimab relative to other comparators. Faricimab should therefore be negotiated so that it does not exceed the drug program cost for the least costly anti-vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) agent reimbursed for the treatment of DME.

**Table 1. Reimbursement Conditions and Reasons**

Reimbursement Condition	Reason	Implementation Guidance
<b>Initiation</b>		
1. Eligibility for reimbursement of faricimab should be based on the criteria used by each of the public drug plans for reimbursement of other anti-VEGFs for the treatment of adult patients with DME.	<p>There is no direct evidence that faricimab is clinically superior or inferior to other anti-VEGF treatments currently reimbursed for the treatment of adult patients with DME.</p> <p>YOSEMITE and RHINE studies demonstrated that faricimab administered at Q8W or PTI dosing was non-inferior to aflibercept Q8W in the change in BCVA from baseline averaged over weeks 48, 52, and 56.</p>	The clinical expert noted to CDEC that patients who may not be suitable for treatment include those who present with major structural damage to the macular retina (e.g. Macular atrophy or fibrosis), the clinician group noted in their input that those without center-involved DME should not be treated with faricimab.
<b>Renewal</b>		
2. Faricimab should be renewed in a similar manner to other anti-VEGFs currently reimbursed for the treatment of adult patients with DME.	There is no evidence that faricimab should be held to a different standard than other anti-VEGF treatments currently reimbursed when considering renewal.	—
<b>Discontinuation</b>		
3. Faricimab should be discontinued in a similar manner to other anti-VEGFs currently reimbursed for the treatment of adult patients with DME.	There is no evidence that faricimab should be held to a different standard than other anti-VEGF treatments currently reimbursed when considering discontinuation.	—
<b>Prescribing</b>		
4. The patient should be under the care of an ophthalmologist with experience in managing DME.	To ensure that faricimab is prescribed for appropriate patients and administered by a trained ophthalmologist.	—
<b>Pricing</b>		
5. Faricimab should be negotiated so that it does not exceed the drug program cost of treatment with the least costly anti-VEGF agent reimbursed for the treatment of DME.	Faricimab demonstrated non-inferiority compared to aflibercept in the clinical trials. Uncertainty in the indirect evidence precluded CDEC from drawing conclusions about the clinical benefit and frequency of injections of faricimab compared to other anti-VEGF agents in patients with DME. As such, there is insufficient evidence to justify a cost premium for faricimab over the least expensive anti-VEGF reimbursed for DME.	—

BCVA = best-corrected visual acuity; CDEC = Canadian Drug Expert Committee; DME = diabetic macular edema; PTI = personalized treatment interval; Q8W = every 8 weeks; VEGF = vascular endothelial growth factor.

## Discussion Points

- CDEC discussed that although faricimab was non-inferior to aflibercept in the YOSEMITE and RHINE trials, there is limited direct evidence comparing faricimab to other treatments currently available for DME. CDEC discussed the results of one network meta-analysis (NMA) that was conducted to estimate the efficacy and frequency of injection of faricimab in patients

with DME to other anti-VEGFs. The limitations in the indirect evidence have led to inconclusive results regarding faricimab's efficacy and frequency of injection when compared to other anti-VEGFs.

- CDEC noted that frequency of injection is considered to be an important outcome of interest by both patient and clinician groups as it has implications on the frequency of adverse events, HRQoL, and burden of treatment. CDEC discussed that based on the direct and indirect evidence available, the actual magnitude and clinical significance of any reduction in the frequency of injection compared to existing therapies in clinical practice is uncertain. In addition, in the YOSEMITE and RHINE trials, aflibercept was given at a fixed dosing interval in the maintenance phase, which does not align with the “treat-and-extend” protocol commonly used in clinical practice, thus limiting the generalizability of the results.
- A biosimilar for ranibizumab was recently approved by Health Canada. CDEC discussed that, at the time of this review, the comparative efficacy and cost effectiveness of faricimab relative to biosimilars of anti-VEGFs is unknown. CDEC considered there is potential for faricimab not to be cost effective versus a biosimilar of an anti-VEGF used to treat DME.

## Background

Diabetic macular edema (DME) is vision-threatening complication of diabetic retinopathy that occurs when damaged capillaries in the eye leak fluid into the centre of the retina (the macula) causing it to thicken. Generally, DME manifests as a slowly progressive vision loss in people with either type 1 or type 2 diabetes mellitus. Untreated DME is a leading cause of visual loss, visual disability, and legal blindness in people with diabetes. An estimated 60,000 adults with DME in Canada experience vision impairment requiring treatment.

In Canada, the current first-line standard of care for DME patients with central macular thickening is anti-vascular endothelial growth factors (anti-VEGF) agents, which include ranibizumab, aflibercept, and bevacizumab (off-label). These agents can delay and, in some cases, reverse disease progression of DME, as well as improve vision related and general health-related quality of life (HRoQL). Anti-VEGFs are administered as intravitreal (IVT) injections on an ongoing basis and the interval between injections ranges between every 1 to 3 months after completion of loading doses. As adjunctive therapies, patients may receive focal laser therapy or vitrectomy (for eyes with vitreomacular traction). For patients who have had cataract extraction with lens implants (i.e., pseudophakic), intravitreal steroids may be used as a second-line adjunctive treatment.

Faricimab has been approved by Health Canada for the treatment with DME in adults (18 years or older). Faricimab is a humanized bispecific immunoglobulin G1 directed against human VEGF-A (vascular endothelial growth factor-A) and Ang-2 (Angiopoietin-2). It is available as a single-use vial for intravitreal injection and the Health Canada-approved dose is 6 mg (0.05 mL) administered by intravitreal injection for 6 loading doses every 4 weeks (Q4W), followed by injections every 8 weeks (Q8W); or 6 mg (0.05 mL) administered intravitreally Q4W for at least the first 4 doses, followed by dosing via treat-and-extend approach, with dosing intervals of up to every 16 weeks (Q16W) based on patient outcomes.

## Sources of Information Used by the Committee

To make their recommendation, the Committee considered the following information:

- A systematic review that included 2 phase III RCTs in patients with DME.
- Patients' perspectives gathered through a joint patient input from the following patient groups: Fighting Blindness Canada, The Canadian Council of the Blind, CNIB, Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada, and Diabetes Canada
- Input from public drug plans that participate in the CADTH review process
- Input from one clinical specialist with expertise diagnosing and treating patients with DME
- Input from one clinician group, the Canadian Retina Society.
- A review of the pharmacoeconomic model and report submitted by the sponsor.

## Stakeholder Perspectives

### Patient Input

CADTH received one joint patient input from the following patient groups: Fighting Blindness Canada, The Canadian Council of the Blind, CNIB, Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada, and Diabetes Canada. Canadians with DME indicated that the condition had a “substantial and life-altering” impact on their lives, as the condition causes vision loss that can affect daily activities such as reading, using a phone, and driving. Patients also mentioned experiencing emotional, psychological, and social impacts from the condition, for example, having worries about the condition worsening in the future and requiring help with everyday tasks and to get to appointments. Further, patients still must cope with common symptoms of diabetes including extreme fatigue, weight changes, and frequent urination and their associated management. Patients indicated a need for a treatment that reduces the physical (e.g. pain from injection), psychological (e.g. anxiety or fear about the injection), and logistical burden (e.g. frequency of appointments) of current treatments. Patients expressed interest in a treatment that is less invasive or similarly invasive but administered less frequently, thus requiring fewer travel for appointments and less dependency on caregivers. Patients living outside of Canada’s urban centres and vulnerable populations may experience greater burdens (e.g., increased challenges attending appointments).

### Clinician input

#### *Input from clinical experts consulted by CADTH*

The clinical expert consulted by CADTH indicated the treatment goals of DME are to delay and, in some cases, reverse disease progression of DME/diabetic retinopathy, as well as to improve vision related and general quality of life. Considering most patients are currently required to attend treatment visits once every 1 to 3 months, the clinical expert noted that there is an unmet need for treatments that can be given at longer treatment intervals, without recurrence of disease, to reduce the burden on patients and caregivers associated with frequent treatment visits and to increase adherence with treatment regimes.

The clinical expert noted that faricimab is expected to have a similar place in therapy as other anti-VEGFs, as a first line or as a later line of treatment in patients with DME. The clinical expert indicated that if faricimab is reimbursed, a shift in the treatment paradigm will likely given that faricimab is the first anti-VEGF approved for an extended interval of up to 16 weeks, which could potentially address the unmet need related to frequent treatment visits. The clinical expert noted the dual mechanism of faricimab, which targets both the VEGF-A and Ang-2 pathways, as being relevant for diabetic retinopathy.

The clinical expert identified that patients with diabetic retinopathy associated with vision loss secondary to centre-involving DME are suitable candidates for faricimab. The clinical expert indicated that faricimab can be used in patients who are treatment-naïve or those who require a change in therapy due to inadequate response to other anti-VEGF agents. Patients who may not be suitable for treatment include those who present with major structural damage to the macular retina (e.g. Macular atrophy or fibrosis), according to the expert.

The clinical expert noted that clinical evaluation and optical coherence tomography (OCT) should be performed for prognosis and follow-up at dosing visits. Key assessment outcomes including change in visual acuity, retinal thickness, and the presence of retinal fluid. According to the expert, optimal response to anti-VEGFs is generally achieved at least 6 to 12 months after initiation of therapy.

The clinical expert indicated that faricimab should be discontinued in patients with treatment futility with proof of irreversible anatomic or functional damage, such as macular atrophy (schema) and fibrosis.

Regarding prescribing conditions, the clinical expert recommended retina subspecialty care as the most appropriate treatment setting for prescription and administration of faricimab in urban areas and trained comprehensive ophthalmologists with experience and expertise in managing DME as sufficient in rural settings.

#### *Clinician group input*

CADTH received input from one clinician group, the Canadian Retina Society.

The clinician group input was consistent with the clinical expert CADTH consulted with respect to the unmet need for a more durable treatment with fewer injections to reduce treatment burden while maintaining maximal vision gain. The clinical group also noted minimizing side effects as an important consideration, for example, injection related complications including inflammation, infection, bleeding, retinal detachment, cataract, and glaucoma.

Clinician group input was consistent with the clinical expert input regarding potential place in therapy and suitable patient population for faricimab. They also noted that patients without center-involved DME should not be treated with faricimab and those without vision loss secondary to DME ('pre-symptomatic' patients) should be monitored as long as very close follow-up can be maintained.

Clinician group input generally aligned with the clinical expert input on assessing response to treatment and discontinuation of treatment. The clinician group highlighted improvement in vision, reduction or resolution of macular edema, regression in diabetic retinopathy severity scale (DRSS), and reduction in frequency of treatment (4 months or longer interval between treatments) as clinically meaningful outcomes.

The clinician group's suggested setting for treatment administration was more broadly identified as ophthalmology offices in the community setting and/or hospital setting.

## Drug Program Input

Input was obtained from the drug programs that participate in the CADTH reimbursement review process. The following were identified as key factors that could potentially impact the implementation of a CADTH recommendation for faricimab:

- Relevant Comparators
- Considerations for initiation of therapy
- Considerations for discontinuation of therapy
- Considerations for prescribing of therapy
- System and economic issues

The clinical experts consulted by CADTH provided advice on the potential implementation issues raised by the drug programs.

**Table 2. Responses to Questions from the Drug Programs**

Implementation Issues	Response
<b>Relevant Comparators</b>	
<p>The active comparator in the pivotal trials of faricimab (YOSEMITE &amp; RHINE) was aflibercept, which is appropriate, however, would it have been helpful to have a different active comparator or more than one active comparator?</p>	<p>The clinical expert noted to CDEC that although it would be ideal to have direct comparative evidence for ranibizumab and bevacizumab as well, including only aflibercept was a reasonable choice for the trial design and it was likely the most appropriate comparator among the anti-VEGF agents available at the time of study conduct.</p>
<p>Intravitreal bevacizumab could be considered a comparator in this population, however, its use is off-label. It was considered in the indirect treatment comparison (ITC), which looked at ranibizumab, aflibercept, brolucizumab, and bevacizumab. The NMA demonstrated [REDACTED] than [REDACTED] these current options available in Canada.</p> <p>Was the ITC sufficient or adequate?</p>	<p>CDEC noted that there may be important sources of bias related to different study or patient characteristics that may impact conclusions that can be drawn about this ITC. These limitations may pose a considerable challenge to take a conclusive decision regarding the validity of the results to inform clinical practice.</p>

Implementation Issues	Response
<b>Relevant Comparators</b>	
Considerations for Initiation of Therapy	
<p>The Health Canada indication is for treatment of DME. The inclusion criteria in the pivotal trials of faricimab (YOSEMITE &amp; RHINE) considered participants with HbA1c ≤ 10%, a BCVA of 73 to 25 letters inclusive (Snellen equivalent of 20/40 to 20/320), and a CST ≥ 325 mm (Spectralis SD-OCT) or ≥ 315 mm (on Cirrus SD-OCT or Topcon SD-OCT).</p> <p>If CDEC recommended to reimburse faricimab, should the initiation criteria specify these characteristics?</p> <p>Current public drug plan criteria for ranibizumab and aflibercept commonly outline such characteristics, it would be helpful to drug plans if this type of information is specified in the criteria.</p>	<p>The clinical expert noted to CDEC that it would be reasonable to align the criteria for therapy initiation with the inclusion criteria of the pivotal trials but would not recommend using HbA1c as a criterion to restrict access to potential treatment.</p> <p>CDEC recommended that the initiation, renewal, and discontinuation criteria for faricimab be similar to other anti-VEGFs currently reimbursed for the treatment of adult patients with DME.</p>
<p>How likely is it that patients will require treatment in two eyes versus in one eye?</p>	<p>The clinical expert noted to CDEC that it is quite common for patients to require treatment in both eyes, about 40-50% of DME patients seen in the expert's practice receive bilateral therapy. In some cases, one of the eyes will respond better to treatment than the other and after a period of bilateral treatment continued treatment may only be needed unilaterally, in the eye that is responding poorly.</p>
<p>The two pivotal trials of faricimab (YOSEMITE &amp; RHINE) included participants who were either treatment-naïve or had previously been treated with an anti-VEGF.</p> <p>Would consideration be given to a criteria requirement of failure or intolerance to an anti-VEGF prior to initiation of faricimab?</p> <p>How likely is it that patients would be prescribed faricimab as first-line treatment for DME?</p>	<p>The clinical expert noted to CDEC that faricimab would not be reserved for treatment failures or intolerance to an anti-VEGF prior to initiation, but would, if it proves to be safe as well as efficacious, offer it to treatment naïve patients, especially those with &lt; 6/15 visual acuity. The clinical expert thought it would be very likely that patients would be prescribed faricimab as a first-line treatment for DME.</p>
<p>The CADTH recommendation for treatment of DME with Lucentis and Eylea were finalized in 2012 and 2015, respectively. For the most part, drug plan coverage criteria for both anti-VEGF drugs do not align with the CADTH recommendations.</p> <p>In the case of a positive recommendation outlining specific criteria (such as HbA1c, BCVA, CST), it would be helpful if the recommendation references the tools utilized in Canadian clinical practice.</p>	<p>CDEC noted that clinicians in different jurisdiction may use different types of anti-VEGF, so tailoring recommendation based on current clinical practice in Canada may miss an opportunity for changes in the future.</p>

Implementation Issues	Response
<b>Relevant Comparators</b>	
<p>Some drug plans may have issues aligning criteria with currently listed anti-VEGF drugs. CADTH recommendation for Eylea was to list in a similar manner as Lucentis. Some of the criteria (e.g. HbA1c) faced push back from prescribers. The prescribers commented that it was inappropriate to control metabolic parameters before starting therapy and would have no effect on treatment. The drug plans are wondering if CDEC could take into consideration the clinical expert's opinion on some of these issues (the criteria for Lucentis may be quite old now).</p>	
<b>Considerations for discontinuation of therapy</b>	
<p>Are there any points at which treatment would be discontinued?</p>	<p>The clinical expert noted to CDEC that treatment would be discontinued in cases of extensive retinal atrophy (ischemia) and/or retinal fibrosis in the macula making treatment improvement of vision impossible, or traction retinal detachment.</p>
<b>Considerations for prescribing of therapy</b>	
<p>Dosing of faricimab for DME is 6 mg administered by intravitreal injection every 4 weeks for the first 4 doses, then the dosing interval may be extended up to every 16 weeks, in increments of 4 weeks, depending on physician's judgement (PTI – personalized treatment interval).</p> <p>What is the expected percentage of patients receiving treatment with faricimab who would be on a PTI of every 16 weeks? Every 12 weeks? Every 8 weeks?</p>	<p>The clinical expert expected the percentage of patients receiving faricimab at various intervals in practice to align with the results of the pivotal trials.</p> <p>Percentages from YOSEMITE &amp; RHINE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q4W: 11% to 13% (Year 1); 7% to 10% (Year 2)</li> <li>• Q8W: 15% to 16% (Year 1); 12% to 14% (Year 2)</li> <li>• Q12W: 20% to 21.0% (Year 1); 14% to 18% (Year 2)</li> <li>• Q16W: 51% to 53% (Year 1); 60% to 65% (Year 2)</li> </ul>
<p>Presuming progression of the disease over time, would it be likely that a patient be switched from faricimab to a different anti-VEGF should the PTI increase to every 8 weeks or every 4 weeks? Or would it be more likely that faricimab be continued?</p>	<p>The clinical expert noted to CDEC that a switch might be made if a patient was on a Q4W interval; but, if a patient was on a Q8W interval, the patient would most likely continue on treatment with faricimab.</p>
<b>System and economic issues</b>	
<p>For Eylea/Lucentis: Some jurisdictions provide these treatments through centralized service (Provincial eye centers)</p> <p>What is the appropriate setting to receive faricimab?</p>	<p>The clinical expert noted to CDEC that retina sub-specialist offices/hospital clinics where available are the most appropriate setting for faricimab treatment. In rural settings, trained comprehensive ophthalmologists with experience and expertise in managing DME may suffice.</p>

A1c = hemoglobin A1C; anti-VEGF = anti-vascular endothelial growth factor; BCVA = best corrected visual acuity; CDEC = Canadian Drug Expert Committee; CST = central subfield thickness; DME = diabetic macular edema; ITC= indirect treatment comparison; MB = Manitoba; PTI = personalized treatment interval (from every 4 weeks up to every 16 weeks); Q4W = every 4 weeks; Q8W = every 8 weeks; Q12W = every 12 weeks; Q16W = every 16 weeks; SD-OCT = Spectral Domain Optical Coherence Tomography; SK = Saskatchewan; QALY = quality-adjusted life year; VEGF = vascular endothelial growth factor.

## Clinical Evidence

### Pivotal Studies and Protocol Selected Studies

#### *Description of studies*

The YOSEMITE and RHINE studies met the inclusion criteria for the systematic review. They were identically designed phase III, multicenter, randomized, double-blind, active-controlled, noninferiority trials that evaluated the use of faricimab in comparison with aflibercept in DME patients (YOSEMITE, n = 940; RHINE, n = 951) over 100 weeks. Patients were randomized on a 1:1:1 ratio into one of three arms: fixed dose faricimab Q8W; faricimab dosing on a personalized treatment interval (PTI) faricimab, or fixed dose aflibercept Q8W. Patients in the faricimab Q8W arm were given faricimab 6 mg intravitreally Q4W for 6 loading doses followed by maintenance doses Q8W. Patients in the faricimab PTI arm were given faricimab 6 mg intravitreally Q4W for 4 loading doses, after which maintenance doses could be Q4W, Q8W, Q12W, or Q16W depending on patient outcomes as determined by a pre-defined algorithm. Patients in the aflibercept arm received aflibercept 2 mg intravitreally Q4W for 5 loading doses then at a fixed maintenance interval of Q8W.

Both studies aimed to establish the noninferiority of faricimab to aflibercept through the primary outcome, which was the change from baseline in best corrected visual acuity (BCVA) (measured using the Early Treatment Diabetic Retinopathy Study [ETDRS] chart) averaged over weeks 48, 52, and 56 in the intention-to-treat (ITT) population. The noninferiority margin was specified as 4 letters on ETDRS chart. The proportion of patients with a  $\geq 2$ -step diabetic retinopathy severity (DRS) improvement from baseline on the ETDRS DRSS at week 52 was a key secondary endpoint. The noninferiority margin for this outcome was specified as a difference of 10% between treatment arms. Other secondary outcomes included frequency of administration for faricimab PTI, retinal thickness, presence of retinal fluids, and measures of HRQoL/vision-related function, all of which were analyzed without control for multiplicity. The primary analysis was conducted at week 56 and secondary analysis data was available up to week 100.

The baseline demographic and ocular characteristics of patients were overall balanced between the treatment arms within each study. The baseline characteristics were generally similar across the studies, except for median months since DME diagnosis, which was shorter for patients in YOSEMITE compared to RHINE (3.1 months versus 6.6 months, respectively), and mean baseline central subfield thickness (CST), which was slightly higher for patients in YOSEMITE compared to RHINE (487.5  $\mu\text{m}$  versus 471.6  $\mu\text{m}$ , respectively). In both studies, the median age of patients at baseline was between 62 to 64 years, and the majority were male (>57%), and White (>76%). At the start of the studies, most patients (around 70% to 75%) had DRS level of 35 to 47 (from mild to moderately severe non-proliferative diabetic retinopathy), with mean baseline BCVA scores of around 62 letters. Approximately 20% to 23% of patients had been previously treated with an anti-VEGF.

#### *Efficacy Results*

##### **Change in Visual Acuity**

The primary outcome of both studies was the change from baseline in BCVA (ETDRS letters) averaged over weeks 48, 52, and 56 in the ITT population. In the YOSEMITE trial, the mean difference of change between the faricimab treatment groups and aflibercept was -0.2 letters (97.5% confidence interval [CI], -2.0 to 1.6) and 0.7 letters (97.5% CI, -1.1 to 2.5) for faricimab Q8W and faricimab PTI arms, respectively. In the RHINE trial, the mean difference of change was 1.5 letters (97.5% CI, -0.1 to 3.2) and 0.5 letters (97.5% CI, -1.1 to 2.1) for faricimab Q8W and faricimab PTI arms respectively, compared to aflibercept. The confidence interval for all these estimates did not cross the preestablished noninferiority margin of 4 letters. All the confidence intervals in these comparisons crossed the line of no effect and therefore neither faricimab arm was superior to aflibercept for change in BCVA. Results of the sensitivity analyses, the supplemental analyses, and the per-protocol population were congruent with the primary analysis.

The proportion of patients gaining greater than or equal to 15 ETDRS letters in BCVA from baseline averaged over weeks 48, 52, and 56 (a secondary outcome) was comparable across treatment arms and studies: 29.2%, 35.5%, and 31.9% in the faricimab Q8W, faricimab PTI, and aflibercept Q8W arms, respectively in YOSEMITE, and 33.6%, 28.3%, and 30.5% respectively in RHINE. Most patients (>95% across treatment arms) avoided a loss of 15 or more ETDRS letters in BCVA from baseline throughout the studies.

Comparable results were also seen across all three treatment arms for patients gaining  $\geq 10$ ,  $\geq 5$ , or  $\geq 0$  letters, or avoiding a loss of  $\geq 10$  or  $\geq 5$  letters in BCVA from baseline in both studies, which were assessed as other secondary outcomes in the trials.

Results at year 2 were mostly congruent with year 1 for BCVA outcomes above, except for the faricimab PTI arm in the RHINE study, in which a numerically lower adjusted proportion of patients gained greater than or equal to 15 ETDRS letters in BCVA from baseline averaged over weeks 92, 96, and 100 compared with the aflibercept Q8W arm.

## Change in CST

In both YOSEMITE and RHINE, patients in the faricimab arms (Q8W and PTI) had numerically greater reductions in CST from baseline to weeks 48, 52, and 56, compared to the aflibercept Q8W group (a secondary outcome), with a difference in mean adjusted change of  $-36.2 \mu\text{m}$  (95% CI,  $-47.8$  to  $-24.7$ );  $-26.2 \mu\text{m}$  (95% CI,  $-37.7$  to  $-14.7$ ) in YOSEMITE, and  $-25.7 \mu\text{m}$  (95% CI,  $-37.4$  to  $-14.0$ );  $-17.6 \mu\text{m}$  (95% CI,  $-29.2$  to  $-6.0$ ) in  $\mu\text{m}$  for faricimab Q8W and faricimab PTI arms, respectively.

A numerically higher proportion of patients treated with faricimab Q8W or PTI had an absence of DME (CST  $<325 \mu\text{m}$  for Spectralis SD-OCT) averaged over weeks 48, 52, and 56 compared with patients treated with aflibercept Q8W, with a difference in the adjusted proportion of 16.0% (95% CI, 8.9% to 23.1%); 12.7% (95% CI, 5.4% to 20.0%) in YOSEMITE and 12.3% (95% CI, 5.7% to 18.9%); 8.2% (95% CI, 1.5% to 14.9%) in RHINE between the faricimab Q8W and PTI dosing arms, respectively, when compared with the aflibercept Q8W arm.

The differences between faricimab treatment arms and the aflibercept group for both CST-related outcomes above were less pronounced at year 2 of the studies.

## Frequency of Faricimab Injections

The studies measured the proportion of patients in the faricimab PTI arm on a Q4W, Q8W, Q12W, and Q16W injection interval as a secondary outcome. At week 52, the proportion of patients who received faricimab Q4W, Q8W, Q12W, and Q16W in YOSEMITE was 10.8%, 15.4%, 21.0% and 52.8% respectively, while in RHINE, the proportions were 13.3%, 15.6%, 20.1%, and 51.0% respectively. At week 96, the proportion of patients in the faricimab PTI arm on a Q4W, Q8W, Q12W, Q16W treatment interval, a secondary outcome, was 7.0%, 14.8%, 18.1% and 60.0% respectively in YOSEMITE, while in RHINE, the proportions were 10.1%, 11.8%, 13.6% and 64.5%, respectively.

## HRQoL and Vision-related Function

Patients treated with faricimab Q8W or PTI had comparable mean changes from baseline in the National Eye Institute Visual Functioning Questionnaire-25 (NEI VFQ-25) composite score at week 24, week 52 and week 100 compared with patients treated with aflibercept Q8W in both studies (a secondary outcome). At week 52, the difference in the adjusted mean change from baseline in NEI VFQ-25 composite score was  $-0.2$  points (95% CI,  $-2.1$  to  $1.7$ );  $0.5$  points (95% CI,  $-1.5$  to  $2.4$ ) in YOSEMITE and  $-0.8$  points (95% CI,  $-2.7$  to  $1.1$ );  $-1.0$  points (95% CI,  $-2.9$  to  $0.8$ ) between the faricimab Q8W and PTI dosing arms when compared to the aflibercept Q8W arm, respectively. Around half of patients (46.0% to 52.5%) in all treatment groups had a  $\geq 4$ -point improvement from baseline in NEI VFQ-25 composite score (an exploratory outcome) in both studies at week 24.

A comparable proportion of patients, around two-thirds of patients (68.8% to 77.2% across all treatment groups) in both studies, had a BCVA Snellen equivalent of 20/40 or better averaged over weeks 48, 52, and 56 (a secondary outcome and a common visual acuity standard used for driving licensing in the United States), with consistent results at year 2 of the studies.

The number of patients progressing to legal blindness (a secondary outcome, defined as BCVA Snellen equivalent of 20/200 or worse) was small across all treatment arms in both studies during the entire study period (1.5% to 2.1% per arm).

## Absence of Retinal Fluids

Over the course of both studies a numerically higher proportion of patients treated in the faricimab Q8W arm had an absence of intraretinal fluid (IRF) at week 52 (a secondary outcome) compared to the aflibercept Q8W group, with a difference in the adjusted proportion of 16.6% (95% CI, 8.7% to 24.5%) in YOSEMITE; and 10.7% (95% CI, 2.8% to 18.6%) in RHINE. The difference in

adjusted proportions of patients with an absence of IRF between the faricimab PTI and aflibercept Q8W treatment groups at week 52 were less pronounced: 13.4% (95% CI, 5.4% to 21.3%) in YOSEMITE; and 7.2% (95% CI, -0.5% to 14.9%) in RHINE. After week 48, the vast majority of patients (>94% across treatment arms) in both studies had an absence of subretinal fluid (SRF) (a secondary outcome).

### Improvement from Baseline on the ETDRS DRSS

There were conflicting results between YOSEMITE and RHINE for the proportion of patients with a 2-step or greater change on the ETDRS DRSS from baseline at week 52, the key secondary endpoint in the studies. In YOSEMITE, noninferiority for this endpoint was met, with the difference in the adjusted proportion between the faricimab (Q8W and PTI) arms compared to aflibercept Q8W of 10.2% (97.5% CI, 0.3% to 20.0%) and 6.1% (97.5% CI, -3.6% to 15.8%), respectively. However, in RHINE, noninferiority was not met for this outcome as the lower bound of the 97.5% CI for the difference in the adjusted proportion between the faricimab and aflibercept arms was less than -10% for both the faricimab Q8W and faricimab PTI arms at week 52: -2.6% (97.5% CI, -12.6% to 7.4%) and -3.5% (97.5% CI, -13.4% to 6.3%), respectively. At week 96, there was a generally comparable proportion of patients in the faricimab (Q8W and PTI) and aflibercept arms of both studies who achieved a  $\geq 2$ -step improvement on the ETDRS DRSS from baseline in both studies.

A comparable proportion of patients in the faricimab (Q8W; PTI) arms versus the aflibercept arm achieved a 3 or greater step improvement on the ETDRS DRSS from baseline at week 52, a secondary outcome (14.8% to 19.5% across treatment arms in both studies). Few patients developed new PDR in the study eye over time (a secondary outcome) (<3% in any treatment arm up to week 96 in both studies). Similarly, few patients in any treatment arm across both studies had a  $\geq 2$ -step or  $\geq 3$ -step worsening at week 52, received vitrectomy, or received panretinal photocoagulation (PRP) (<1.5% per arm for each individual outcome; all were exploratory outcomes).

### Harms Results

Over 100 weeks in the safety evaluable population, the proportion of patients reporting at least one ocular AE in the study eye was comparable across treatment arms in the YOSEMITE trial (47.0%, 46.6%, and 46.3% in the faricimab Q8W, faricimab PTI, and aflibercept Q8W arms, respectively). In the RHINE study, a higher proportion in the faricimab Q8W and faricimab PTI arms reported an ocular AE compared with the aflibercept Q8W arm (52.4%, 51.7%, and 44.6% in the faricimab Q8W, faricimab PTI, and aflibercept Q8W arms, respectively). The adverse events likely contributing to the higher incidence of ocular AEs in both the faricimab arms compared with aflibercept in the RHINE study include cataract, dry eye, and blepharitis, while occurrence of conjunctival haemorrhage, intraocular pressure increased, vitreous floaters, cataract subcapsular, posterior capsule opacification, eye pruritis, and conjunctivitis allergic were numerically higher in the faricimab Q8W arm compared with the aflibercept Q8W arm. The most common ocular AEs in both studies were: cataract (9.9% to 17.6% per arm) and conjunctival haemorrhage (5.6% to 9.8% per arm).

Ocular SAEs were reported with low frequency in both trials; however, in both YOSEMITE and RHINE there was a slightly higher frequency of ocular SAEs in the faricimab PTI arm compared with aflibercept Q8W, and both faricimab arms were somewhat higher compared with the aflibercept Q8W arm in YOSEMITE (YOSEMITE: 3.8%, 4.5%, and 2.3%; RHINE: 4.4%, 6.3%, and 4.1% patients in the faricimab Q8W, faricimab PTI, and aflibercept Q8W arms, respectively). The most common ocular SAE reported during both studies was cataract (0.6% to 2.2% across treatment arms). The frequency of non-ocular SAEs in any arm of the studies was in the range of 20.1% to 31.6%, with COVID-19 (1.3% to 3.2%) and pneumonia (1.3% to 2.6%) being the most frequently reported non-ocular SAEs across treatment arms in both studies.

In both studies, a small proportion of patients in all arms discontinued treatment due to AEs (1.6% to 2.9% per arm). The most common AE ( $\geq 1\%$  in any arm) related to discontinuing treatment was uveitis (3 patients in the YOSEMITE faricimab PTI arm). A higher proportion of patients in all arms discontinued the study due to adverse events (4.4% to 8.6% across treatment arms). The most common reason for discontinuing the study was death (9 patients across faricimab arms; 1 patient in aflibercept arm) and COVID-19 (8 patients across faricimab arms; 1 patient in aflibercept arm).

Across both YOSEMITE and RHINE, death was reported in 81 patients (4.4%, 4.7%, 3.7% in the faricimab Q8W, faricimab PTI, and aflibercept Q8W arms, respectively, pooled for both studies). The most common primary cause of death was the reported term of

death, which included gunshot wounds, fall, natural causes, advanced hepatocellular carcinoma with metastasis to bones, head injury, and unexplained deaths (3 patients, 6 patients, and 1 patient in the faricimab Q8W, faricimab PTI and aflibercept arms, respectively). Study investigators did not consider any of the deaths to be related to study treatment.

Cataract was the most commonly occurring notable harm, occurring in 9.9% to 17.6% of patients across all treatment arms during both studies. Over the course of both studies, 6 patients reported endophthalmitis in the faricimab arms, while 1 patient in the aflibercept arm reported endophthalmitis. Uveitis and iritis were the most commonly reported intraocular inflammation events. Uveitis occurred in 7 patients in the faricimab arms, and no patients in the aflibercept treatments groups. Occurrence of iritis was comparable across treatment arms. Non-ocular arterial thromboembolic events (ATEs) were reported in 6.9% to 10.9% of patients across both studies, with comparable frequency between treatment arms. Vitreous floaters were reported in 1.9% to 5.4% of patients and these events were numerically higher in the faricimab Q8W arms than in the aflibercept arm of both studies. Retinal detachment, retinal tear, glaucoma, retinal vascular occlusive disease events, eye irritation, ocular discomfort, and blurred vision occurred infrequently (<2% for each harm across all treatment arms in both studies). A small number of patients in the faricimab treatment arms reported retinal detachment (6 over both studies) and retinal tear (3 over both studies) while there were 2 retinal detachments in the aflibercept arms and no retinal tears. There were no reports of retinal haemorrhage as an AE in either study.

### *Critical Appraisal*

The overall study designs of YOSEMITE and RHINE were appropriate for the objectives of the studies. There were no major concerns with the methods of randomization, allocation concealment, and blinding. The conclusion of noninferiority of faricimab to aflibercept was drawn based on an ITT analysis of the primary outcome. It is generally preferred if the claim of noninferiority was based on agreement between both the ITT population and the per-protocol population for a more conservative approach in the context of noninferiority studies. Nonetheless, the results of a supplementary per-protocol analysis in the studies, and several sensitivity analyses conducted by the sponsor and the FDA were consistent with those of the primary ITT analysis. While there were a large proportion of patients who had at least one major protocol deviation (around 50%) in both studies (most frequently missed visits), the sensitivity and supplemental analyses were consistent with the primary estimand. The noninferiority margin of 4 ETDRS letters was considered reasonable by the clinical expert. The studies were adequately powered for the assessment of the primary outcome. Intercurrent events (ICE) were reported in approximately 9% to 10% of patients in both studies, mostly COVID-19-related. A key limitation in the statistical analysis was the lack of adjustment for multiplicity for secondary outcomes and subgroup analyses, and no sensitivity analyses were conducted to assess the impact of missing data on the secondary outcomes. As such, these findings were considered exploratory. Another limitation is the different dosing schedules used in the treatment arms. In the maintenance phase, the treatment interval could be modified post-randomization for the faricimab PTI arm using pre-specified criteria based on a patient's BCVA and CST outcomes to either Q4W, Q8W, Q12W or Q16W intervals, however intervals in the aflibercept arm were fixed throughout.

In terms of generalizability, a strength of the trials is that they included patients who had previously received another anti-VEGF as well as patients who were treatment naïve. A limitation to note is that the studies excluded some patients who would typically receive treatment in clinical practice: patients with HbA1c greater than 10% were excluded as well as patients with high-risk PDR. The generalizability of trials results to these patient populations is unclear. In addition, aflibercept was given at a fixed dosing interval in the maintenance phase, which does not align with the "treat-and-extend" protocol commonly used in clinical practice, thus limiting the generalizability of the results. There is also some uncertainty on the outcome of frequency of faricimab injections considering the method of interval assignment for faricimab PTI in the maintenance phase may be more rigid than what would be used in clinical practice, although the expert thought simplified thresholds for BCVA and OCT from the algorithm could be applied by clinicians in practice. In the trials patients were monitored monthly; however, in clinical practice monitoring would typically only occur at treatment visits during the maintenance phase, according to the clinical expert. Furthermore, while the length of assessment in the primary analysis was adequate for assessing the efficacy and safety of faricimab in the context of a noninferiority trial according to the clinical expert, longer term data is required to assess the durability and long-term safety of faricimab. Lastly, there is no direct evidence comparing faricimab to ranibizumab (at Health Canada approved dosages) or bevacizumab, which represents an important evidence gap in the evaluation of anti-VEGFs.

## Indirect Comparisons

### *Description of Studies*

One indirect treatment comparison (ITC) was submitted by the sponsor and included in this review. No additional ITCs were identified in the literature. The sponsor performed a Bayesian network meta-analysis (NMA) to estimate the efficacy of faricimab in patients with DME to other anti-VEGFs.

### *Efficacy Results*

For the outcome of BCVA at 1 year, 23 trials were analyzed using a random effects model. In the ITC [REDACTED]. In addition, [REDACTED].

For the outcome of number of injections at 1 year, 11 trials were analyzed under a random effects model. The ITC showed that [REDACTED].

Although [REDACTED] this data is impacted by administration of therapies with fixed intervals in clinical trials according to protocols within the 1-year time frame of the RCTs.

For the outcome of retinal thickness, at 1 year, 23 RCTs were analyzed using a random effects model. The results of the NMA showed [REDACTED]. However, 95% CrI are wide and heterogeneity in the methods to assess retinal thickness across studies adds considerable uncertainty to the results for this analysis and limit conclusions about the relative effect of faricimab on central retinal thickness.

The outcome of proportion of patients gaining or losing 10 or 15 ETDRS letters at 1 year was analyzed, but poor model fit precludes conclusions that can be made on the effect of faricimab versus comparators for this outcome.

### *Harms Results*

There was limited data available for the NMAs that were conducted for ocular adverse effects and for discontinuation, therefore, fixed effects models were used for these endpoints, and there was a high degree of uncertainty in these models. Limitations of the NMA preclude conclusions regarding ocular adverse effects, and overall treatment discontinuation.

### *Critical Appraisal*

There may be important sources of bias related to different study or patient characteristics that may impact conclusions that can be drawn about this ITC. The limitations described may pose a considerable challenge to take a conclusive decision regarding the validity of the results to inform clinical practice. There were many trials with missing information about study and baseline characteristic, and considerable heterogeneity across these characteristics. Most notably, the heterogeneity in the methods of assessing retinal thickness and the availability of information around presence of significant diabetic macular ischemia or systemic comorbidities. Additionally, there was a weak connection between faricimab and the rest of the network through aflibercept.

Although [REDACTED]. The results of the analysis related to number of injections will have been impacted by administration of therapies with fixed intervals in clinical trials according to study protocols. Limitations to the NMA preclude conclusions about proportion of patients gaining or losing 10 or 15 ETDRS letters and retinal thickness.

There was limited data available for the NMAs that were conducted for ocular adverse effects and for treatment discontinuation, therefore, fixed effects models were used these end points, and there was a high degree of statistical uncertainty in these models. Therefore, there are limited data to draw any conclusions about the effect of faricimab versus comparators on ocular adverse effects and treatment discontinuation.

## Economic Evidence

### Cost and Cost-Effectiveness

Component	Description
<b>Type of economic evaluation</b>	Cost-utility analysis Markov model
<b>Target population</b>	People with diabetic macular edema (DME)
<b>Treatment</b>	Faricimab
<b>Dose regimen</b>	6 mg administered by intravitreal injection every 4 weeks for the first 4 doses, followed by 6 mg at a dosing interval of up to every 16 weeks
<b>Submitted price</b>	Faricimab, 28.8 mg per 0.24 mL, single-use vial: \$1,350.00
<b>Treatment cost</b>	Faricimab has an annual cost in year 1 ranging from \$8,100 to \$18,900 (6 to 14 injections) and in subsequent years ranging from \$4,050 to \$17,550 (3 to 13 injections)
<b>Comparators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aflibercept</li> <li>• Bevacizumab</li> <li>• Ranibizumab</li> </ul>
<b>Perspective</b>	Canadian publicly funded health care payer
<b>Outcomes</b>	QALYs, LYs
<b>Time horizon</b>	Lifetime (25 years)
<b>Key data source</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The target population (baseline characteristics and clinical efficacy) was based on the phase 3 trials of faricimab: YOSEMITE and RHINE</li> <li>• Comparative clinical efficacy data were derived from a sponsor-submitted network meta-analysis (NMA) to inform: average annual change in BCVA from baseline; transition matrices (i.e., course of the condition); discontinuation rates; adverse events; and injection frequency</li> </ul>
<b>Key limitations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The comparative effectiveness and safety of faricimab is uncertain owing to heterogeneity in the sponsor's NMA and how the NMA results were used to inform the model. Given that the NMA compared the number of injections during an initial 12-month period, it is unknown how faricimab would compare against relevant comparators beyond 12 months.</li> <li>• The drug acquisition costs of bevacizumab were likely overestimated, given that the sponsor assumed that each vial would be used for only one administration. In practice, multiple administrations per vial are common.</li> <li>• Health state utility values are uncertain and likely overestimated.</li> <li>• The sponsor's base case results were not reproducible, and the ICER varied substantially across model runs owing to small differences in QALYs between treatments and an insufficient number of probabilistic model iterations.</li> </ul>
<b>CADTH reanalysis results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the CADTH base case, CADTH assumed that each vial of bevacizumab would be used for multiple administrations and alternative utility values were adopted. CADTH additionally corrected an error in the sponsor's model and increased the number of probabilistic iterations.</li> <li>• Results of the CADTH base case suggest that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Faricimab is less costly and more effective than aflibercept and ranibizumab.</li> <li>○ In sequential analysis, faricimab is associated with an ICER of \$164,743 per QALY compared with bevacizumab (incremental costs \$58,130; incremental QALYs: 0.353).</li> <li>○ There is a 0% probability that faricimab is cost-effective at a willingness-to-pay threshold of \$50,000 per QALY, and a 68% price reduction would be necessary for faricimab to be cost-effective at this threshold.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Although aflibercept and ranibizumab were dominated in the base case probabilistic analysis, there is uncertainty associated with this finding, given that there are small differences in QALYs between treatments (incremental QALYs 0.150 to 0.320) and the identified limitations with the sponsor's NMA.</li> <li>• A scenario analysis, in which equal efficacy and administration frequency were assumed for all comparators, suggested that a price reduction of greater than 98% for faricimab would be required to achieve cost parity with bevacizumab.</li> </ul>

BCVA = best corrected visual acuity; ICER = incremental cost-effectiveness ratio; LY = life-year; NMA = network meta-analysis; QALY = quality-adjusted life-year.

## Budget Impact

CADTH identified the following limitations with the sponsor's analysis: the proportion of patients with DME who are diagnosed was overestimated, the administration frequency is uncertain, brolocizumab was not included as a comparator, and the number of administrations of bevacizumab per vial was underestimated. CADTH reanalysis reduced the proportion of patients with DME who are diagnosed and increased the number of administrations of bevacizumab per vial. In the CADTH base case, the estimated cost savings of funding faricimab for the treatment of DME were \$800,423 in year 1, \$3,211,386 in year 2, \$6,504,889 in year 3, for a three-year total cost savings of \$10,516,698. A scenario analysis conducted by CADTH that assumed that faricimab would obtain a portion of its market share from bevacizumab resulted in an incremental budget impact of \$18,182,088, suggesting that faricimab may ultimately lead to increased costs depending on which treatments are displaced.

## Canadian Drug Expert Committee (CDEC) Information

### Members of the Committee:

Dr. James Silvius (Chair), Dr. Sally Bean, Mr. Dan Dunskey, Dr. Alun Edwards, Mr. Bob Gagne, Dr. Ran Goldman, Dr. Allan Grill, Dr. Christine Leong, Dr. Kerry Mansell, Dr. Alicia McCallum, Dr. Srinivas Murthy, Ms. Heather Neville, Dr. Danyaal Raza, Dr. Emily Reynen, and Dr. Peter Zed.

Meeting Date: August 24, 2022

### Regrets

Two expert committee members did not attend.

### Conflicts of Interest

None