

2025 Clinical Practice Guideline Update by the Infectious Diseases Society of America on the Treatment and Management of COVID-19: Vilobelimab

Nandita Nadig*,¹ Adarsh Bhimraj*,² Kelly Cawcutt,³ Kathleen Chiotos,⁴ Amy L. Dzierba,⁵ Arthur Y. Kim,^{6,7} Greg S. Martin,⁸ Jeffrey C. Pearson,⁹ Amy Hirsch Shumaker,^{10,11} Lindsey R. Baden,^{6,12} Roger Bedimo,¹³ Vincent Chi-Chung Cheng,¹⁴ Kara W. Chew,¹⁵ Eric S. Daar,¹⁶ David V. Glidden,¹⁷ Erica J. Hardy,¹⁸ Steven Johnson,¹⁹ Jonathan Z. Li,^{6,12} Christine MacBrayne,²⁰ Mari M. Nakamura,^{21,22} Laura Riley,^{23,24} Robert W. Shafer,²⁵ Shmuel Shoham,²⁶ Pablo Tebas,²⁷ Phyllis C. Tien,²⁸ Jennifer Loveless,²⁹ Yngve Falck-Ytter,^{10,11} Rebecca L. Morgan⁺,^{10,30} Rajesh T. Gandhi^{+6,7}

*These authors contributed equally to the manuscript.

⁺These authors contributed equally to the manuscript.

¹Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, Chicago, Illinois, USA, ²Division of Infectious Diseases, Houston Methodist Hospital, Houston, Texas, USA, ³Department of Internal Medicine, University of Nebraska Medical Center, Omaha, Nebraska, USA, ⁴Department of Anesthesiology and Critical Care, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia/University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA, ⁵Department of Medicine, New York University Grossman School of Medicine, New York City, New York, USA, ⁶Harvard Medical School, Boston, Massachusetts, USA, ⁷Department of Medicine, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts, USA, ⁸Division of Pulmonary, Allergy, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA, ⁹Department of Pharmacy, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts, USA, ¹⁰Department of Medicine, Case Western Reserve University, School of Medicine, Cleveland, Ohio, USA, ¹¹Department of Medicine, VA Northeast Ohio Healthcare System, Cleveland, Ohio, USA, ¹²Department of Medicine, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts, USA, ¹³Department of Medicine, UT Southwestern/VA North Texas Health Care System, Dallas, Texas, USA, ¹⁴Department of Microbiology, Queen Mary Hospital, Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine, The University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China, ¹⁵Department of Medicine, David Geffen School of Medicine, University of California Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California, USA, ¹⁶Department of Medicine, Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, Torrance, California, USA, ¹⁷Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, UCSF, San Francisco, California, USA, ¹⁸Departments of Medicine and Obstetrics and Gynecology, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, USA, ¹⁹Department of Medicine, University of Colorado School of Medicine, Aurora, Colorado, USA, ²⁰Department of Pharmacy, Children's Hospital Colorado, Aurora, Colorado, USA, ²¹Antimicrobial Stewardship Program and Division of Infectious Diseases, Boston Children's Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts, USA, ²²Department of Pediatrics, Harvard Medical School, Boston, Massachusetts, USA, ²³New York-Presbyterian Hospital, New York City, New York, USA, ²⁴Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Weill Cornell Medicine, New York City, New York, USA, ²⁵Department of Medicine, Stanford University, Palo Alto, California, USA, ²⁶Division of Infectious Diseases, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, Maryland, USA, ²⁷Department of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA, ²⁸Department of Medicine, UCSF/VA San Francisco Health Care System, San Francisco, California, USA, ²⁹Clinical Affairs and Practice Guidelines, Infectious Diseases Society of America, Arlington, Virginia, USA, ³⁰Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence, and Impact, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

ABSTRACT. This article provides a focused update to the clinical practice guideline on the treatment and management of patients with COVID-19, developed by the Infectious Diseases Society of America. The guideline panel presents a recommendation on the use of vilobelimab in hospitalized adults with critical COVID-19. The recommendation is based on evidence derived from a systematic literature review and adheres to a standardized methodology for rating the certainty of evidence and strength of recommendation according to the GRADE (Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development, and Evaluation) approach.

Keywords. COVID-19; SARS-CoV-2; vilobelimab; monoclonal antibody; guideline

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In adults hospitalized with critical COVID-19, should vilobelimab compared to no vilobelimab be added to standard care?

Recommendation: In hospitalized adults with critical COVID-19* requiring mechanical ventilation or ECMO, the IDSA guideline panel recommends vilobelimab only in the context of a clinical trial (*knowledge gap*).

*Critical illness is defined as patients on mechanical ventilation and/or ECMO.

BACKGROUND

Vilobelimab is a monoclonal antibody that targets C5a, a component of the complement system, which is known to play a key role in the excessive inflammation seen in critical COVID-19 cases [1]. C5a has

64 been found to be elevated in patients with critical COVID-19, contributing to acute respiratory distress
65 syndrome (ARDS) and end organ failure [2]. A study in mice demonstrated that an anti-C5a monoclonal
66 antibody can reduce immune system activation and inhibit lung injury [3]. Vilobelimab specifically binds
67 to C5a and blocks its interaction with the C5a receptor, thereby inhibiting its pro-inflammatory effects. By
68 targeting this pathway, vilobelimab reduces the inflammatory response without compromising the rest of
69 the immune system.

70 On April 4, 2023, the FDA issued an Emergency Use Authorization for the use of vilobelimab to
71 treat COVID-19 in hospitalized adults, specifically when administered within 48 hours of mechanical
72 ventilation or extracorporeal membrane oxygenation [4]. This authorization was based on results of the
73 PANAMO trial [5].

74 In this focused update to the 2023 guideline [6], a recommendation is provided for vilobelimab.
75 The primary audience for this recommendation is clinicians treating hospitalized adults with critical
76 COVID-19.

78 ***METHODS***

79 The panel's recommendation is based upon a systematic review of available evidence and adheres to a
80 standardized methodology for rating the certainty of evidence and strength of recommendation according
81 to the GRADE (Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development, and Evaluation) approach
82 (Supplementary Figure 1) [7]. The recommendation has been endorsed by the Society of Infectious
83 Diseases Pharmacists, the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America, and the Society of Critical
84 Care Medicine.

85 Strong recommendations are made when the recommended course of action would apply to most
86 people with few exceptions. Conditional recommendations are made when the suggested course of action
87 would apply to the majority of people with many exceptions and shared decision making is important.

88 Literature searches (up to November 2024) were conducted as part of a systematic review. Key
89 eligibility criteria at both the topic and clinical question levels guided the selection of studies for

inclusion. For this clinical question, only hospitalized adults were included. The primary comparison of interest was vilobelimab versus no vilobelimab.

A critical appraisal of the evidence according to the GRADE approach, along with an assessment of the benefits and harms of care options, informed the recommendation(s) [7,8]. Details of the systematic review and guideline development processes are available in the Supplementary Material.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

The search identified 2 randomized controlled trials that reported on adults ≥ 18 years with critical COVID-19 who were randomized to treatment with vilobelimab (800 mg IV) or placebo/best supportive care (Supplementary Table 1) [5,9]. One phase 2 open-label, multicenter trial (n=30) treated patients in the vilobelimab arm with a maximum of 7 doses of 800 mg IV. In the subsequent blinded, placebo-controlled, phase 3 trial, PANAMO (n=369), patients were treated with a maximum of 6 doses of vilobelimab 800 mg IV. Of participants in the PANAMO trial, approximately 17% received treatment with tocilizumab, 6% with remdesivir, and 3% with baricitinib. These trials reported on the outcomes of mortality at 28 days and serious adverse events (Table 1).

105 **Table 1.** GRADE Evidence Profile: In adults hospitalized with critical COVID-19, should vilobelimab compared to no vilobelimab be added to
106 standard care?

Certainty assessment							No of patients		Effect		Certainty	Importance
No of studies	Study design	Risk of bias	Inconsistency	Indirectness	Imprecision	Other considerations	vilobelimab	no vilobelimab	Relative (95% CI)	Absolute (95% CI)		

Mortality (follow-up: 28 days)

2 ^(5,9)	randomized trials	not serious	not serious	not serious ^a	very serious ^{b,c}	none	56/192 (29.2%)	81/206 (39.3%)	HR 0.73 (0.50 to 1.05)	88 fewer per 1,000 (from 172 fewer to 15 more)	⊕⊕○○ Low	CRITICAL
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Serious adverse events (follow-up: 21 days)

2 ^(5,9)	randomized trials	not serious	not serious	not serious ^a	very serious ^d	none	112/190 (58.9%)	127/204 (62.3%)	RR 0.95 (0.81 to 1.11)	31 fewer per 1,000 (from 118 fewer to 68 more)	⊕⊕○○ Low	CRITICAL
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107 **CI:** confidence interval; **HR:** hazard ratio; **RR:** risk ratio

108 *Explanations*

109 a. Not rated down for indirectness; however, clinical trials excluded immunocompromised persons and limited administration of study drug to participants receiving
110 invasive mechanical ventilation within 48 hours before vilobelimab infusion.

111 b. Few events do not meet optimal information size and suggest fragility of the estimate.

112 c. 95% CI includes potential for reduction in mortality, as well as no meaningful difference with 1% mortality threshold.

113 d. 95% CI crosses multiple thresholds and cannot exclude the possibility of harm.

BENEFITS

Among hospitalized patients, vilobelimab showed a trend toward reduced mortality at 28 days compared to no vilobelimab treatment (HR: 0.73; 95% CI: 0.50, 1.05; Supplementary Figure 2).

HARMS

Serious adverse events among patients receiving vilobelimab did not differ from those receiving usual care (RR: 0.95; 95% CI: 0.81, 1.11; Supplementary Figure 3).

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The panel agreed that the overall certainty of evidence was low (Table 1, Supplementary Table 2), given the sparseness in mortality data and because the upper boundary of the 95% CI failed to exclude the risk of possible harms. The panel also expressed concerns regarding the generalizability and indirectness of the results, as both studies excluded immunocompromised populations, had fewer than 33 participants concomitantly receiving tocilizumab or baricitinib, and were conducted during time periods with different circulating variants of COVID-19 than now. Further concerns included the potential toxicity and uncertain efficacy of adding vilobelimab to other immunomodulators (e.g., baricitinib or tocilizumab) for which there is greater evidence for benefit. The panel also examined the post-hoc, subgroup analysis of vilobelimab given with tocilizumab or baricitinib but recognized the need for more information, given the small number of patients in the subgroup (34 vilobelimab versus 37 placebo) [10]. Additionally, the panel noted the post hoc analysis of vilobelimab's effect by sepsis phenotypes and concluded that future prospective studies are necessary to validate these findings and establish their clinical utility [11].

Because the studies excluded patients <18 years, no statement of benefits vs. harms can be made for this age group.

CONCLUSIONS AND RESEARCH NEEDS

The guideline panel recommends vilobelimab only in the context of a clinical trial. Additional data are needed to assess the efficacy and toxicity of vilobelimab when given to patients receiving tocilizumab or baricitinib, immunomodulators for which there is greater evidence of benefit. More information is needed to assess the efficacy and adverse events of vilobelimab in people who are immunocompromised. In addition, more research is needed on the effects of vilobelimab when given after 48 hours of intubation, which may better represent current clinical practice. Further studies should focus on exploring whether certain subgroups could consistently and reliably benefit more from targeted treatment.

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Drs. Adarsh Bhimraj and Rajesh T. Gandhi are chair and vice chair of the panel, respectively. The Hospitalized Patients subgroup, under the leadership of Dr. Nandita Nadig, led the development of the recommendation. Remaining panelists assisted with interpretation of data, as well as drafting, revising, and approving the recommendation and manuscript. Drs. Rebecca Morgan, lead methodologist, and Yngve Falck-Ytter, methodologist, were responsible for designing and performing the data analyses and leading the panel according to the GRADE process. Jennifer Loveless, methodologist, was responsible for project planning and management, including revisions to and final approval of the recommendation and manuscript.

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Additional Information: More detailed information on the analysis and development of the recommendation is available in the Supplementary Material.

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