ASEAN Joint Assessment Procedure for Pharmaceutical Products Information for applicants

Definition

Joint assessment is a formal procedure in which the same[1] application is simultaneously[2] submitted to all participating ASEAN National Medicines Regulatory Authorities (NRAs). Assessment work is then carried out together by all participating NRAs and a joint assessment report is prepared. At the end of the process, the final decision on the application is then taken, within established time lines, by each individual NRA through their normal decision-making process based on the joint assessment report and, where applicable, nationally-relevant considerations.

Product eligibility criteria

The JA procedure will initially adopt the following eligibility criteria:

a) medicines for treatment of priority diseases in ASEAN region;
b) products already approved by a reference NRA[2a], prequalified by WHO-PQP, or assessed through special regulatory pathways such as EU Article 58 or US-FDA tentative approval;
c) products manufactured in a PIC/S-GMP compliant site (documentary verification only, no inspections foreseen).

Each Notice (see below) inviting expressions of interest will indicate which reference NRAs are accepted for each specific product.

Overall description of the procedure

The JA procedure entails the following steps:

1. The first step is the publication of Notices of Invitation to Express Interest. At appropriate intervals, and on the basis of the agreement reached by the JACG, participating ASEAN NRAs will post Notices of Invitation to Express Interest on their web sites inviting applicants to express their interest in submitting applications through the JA procedure. Notices will mention the following elements of information:
   a) which medicinal products are eligible for the JA procedure within a specified time frame;
   b) which ASEAN NRAs are tentatively participating for which products and which NRA is the Lead NRA for each product;
   c) time frame for submitting Notices for Expressions of Interest and any other relevant aspect of the procedure.

2. In situations of high public health concern, as determined by ASEAN NRAs, selected manufacturers may be directly invited to submit specified products for assessment under the JA procedure without publication of Notices for Expressions of Interest.

3. Applicants express their interest in participating using the standard form AEOI (Annex 1) and, when necessary, form AEOI1 (Annex 1a). By submitting an Expression of Interest, applicants undertake to share the same information with all participating NRAs on all aspects of quality,

[1] Same application refers to the technical content of the application; national administrative parts remain different.
[2] Simultaneously refers to the fact that JA procedure will not start until applications are received in all participating NRAs.
[2a] NRAs which are WHO maturity level 3 or 4, EMA, U.S. FDA

safety and efficacy of the specified medicinal products along with information on variations implemented and/or planned.

4. Lead NRA seeks concurrence and confirmation from all participating NRAs to accept Expression of Interest. If a sufficient number of participating NRAs concur, Lead NRA requests applicant to submit a full application (see point 5 below) and a copy of a letter authorising reference NRA (see model in Annex 2a) or WHO-PQP (see model in Annex 2b) to share confidential information on the product and its assessment and inspections' reports. Applicants must submit applications to all participating NRAs as announced in the Lead NRA request.

5. Applications must comply with the following aspects:

   a) the technical application dossier must include the same technical information as that submitted to reference NRA or WHO-PQP;
   b) the technical part of the dossier in ACTD or ICH-CTD format shall be provided in electronic form to be uploaded to a dedicated, secure web site set up by WHO; only participating NRAs will be able to access and download the dossiers;
   c) administrative part of dossier specific to each participating NRA requirements will be submitted directly to each participating authority;
   d) fees as required by each participating NRA will be paid according to normal national procedures.

6. The administrative part of the dossier, including fees when applicable, shall be submitted individually to all participating NRAs following locally applicable procedures. The technical part of the dossier shall be uploaded to a dedicated, secure web site managed by WHO (uploading instructions will be provided). Review of applications will start only after all participating NRAs have received the application(s) and related documentation and have considered it accepted for assessment.

7. The Lead NRA coordinates and facilitates the implementation of the procedure and acts as 'rapporteur'. The Lead NRA will undertake the following steps (further addressed below and shown in flowchart next page):
   a) verify that all participating NRAs have received the administrative part of application dossier;
   b) verify that applicant's submission is complete and receive confirmation by participating NRAs;
   c) request applicant to provide missing documentation, if applicable;
   d) ensure that exchange of letters for sharing documentation (see below) is completed;
   e) request reference NRA to share confidential information and assessment and inspections' reports;
   f) lead the assessment of application dossier, coordinate the preparation of draft assessment report and circulate to participating NRAs (this is done by sharing tasks among all participating NRAs, as feasible);
   g) receive comments by participating NRAs about draft assessment report and, if applicable, need to request additional information from applicant;
   h) receive and circulate feedback from applicant, if applicable;
   i) set date for assessors from participating NRAs to participate in JA session;
   j) coordinate with WHO and/or expert(s) from reference NRA for participation in JA session.

8. An exchange of formal agreement letters takes place, facilitated by WHO, between participating NRAs and either reference NRA or WHO-PQP. The exchange of letters addresses the following matters:
   a) participating NRAs convey to reference NRA/WHO-PQP their willingness to implement JA for a specific product;

b) participating NRAs request access to information and commit to comply with confidentiality requirements;

If part of the information contained in the application dossier or in the reference NRA/WHO-PQP documentation to be shared does not belong to the applicant or to reference NRA/WHO-PQP, separate confidentiality commitments will have to be signed.

9. There could be situations in which a product proposed for JA is already authorized for marketing in one or more AMS. In these cases the NRA that has already approved the product decides if it wishes to participate in the JA anyway. The applicant must act according to the NRA decision and submit a full application according to the JA procedure. The outcome of the JA may result in no change, in a variation to the existing marketing authorization, or in a new marketing authorization.

10. Participating NRAs notify the Lead NRA that application and reference documentation from reference NRA or WHO-PQP have been received. When all NRAs have received the necessary documentation and notifications have been received, Lead NRA tentatively plans a JA session to take place within an agreed time line that can be different for different products. During the time leading to the JA session, the Lead NRA coordinates the preparation of a draft assessment report and shares it with all participating NRAs. NRAs notify the Lead NRA about their observations, if any, on the documentation. Observations may entail requesting additional documentation from the applicant. In this case, the Lead NRA will ensure that all observations have been received and then notify the applicant as required. The time frame is suspended until response is received from the applicant addressing the observations raised.

11. After the feedback from the applicant has been received, the Lead NRA shares it with all participating NRAs and coordinates the preparation of a draft joint assessment report. If all participating NRA concur with the conclusions stated in the draft report and deem unnecessary to raise further matters, then the report is formally transmitted to all NRAs for national decision-making. If one or more NRAs deem necessary a face-to-face discussion, the Lead NRA organizes a JA session with support from WHO.

12. At the request of participating NRAs through the Lead NRA, WHO will facilitate the participation of one or more senior assessors from a reference NRA or WHO-PQP in a JA session.

13. A face-to-face JA session is a technical meeting attended by two designated assessors (or more if funds permit) from each participating NRA. The session is assisted, when requested, by senior assessors provided by reference NRA and/or WHO. Purpose of the JA session is to review and discuss all aspects of the application, clarify technical issues, address diverging opinions, and prepare a joint assessment report. A JA session is expected to last up to four working days. Alternatively, a JA session may be conducted via a web conference to reduce JA time. At the end of the JA session, participants take the joint assessment report to their own NRA for inclusion in the national decision-making process.

14. JA reports are confidential documents belonging to the participating NRAs. After receiving a JA report, each participating NRA is expected to take a decision on the application at their earliest decision-making meeting.

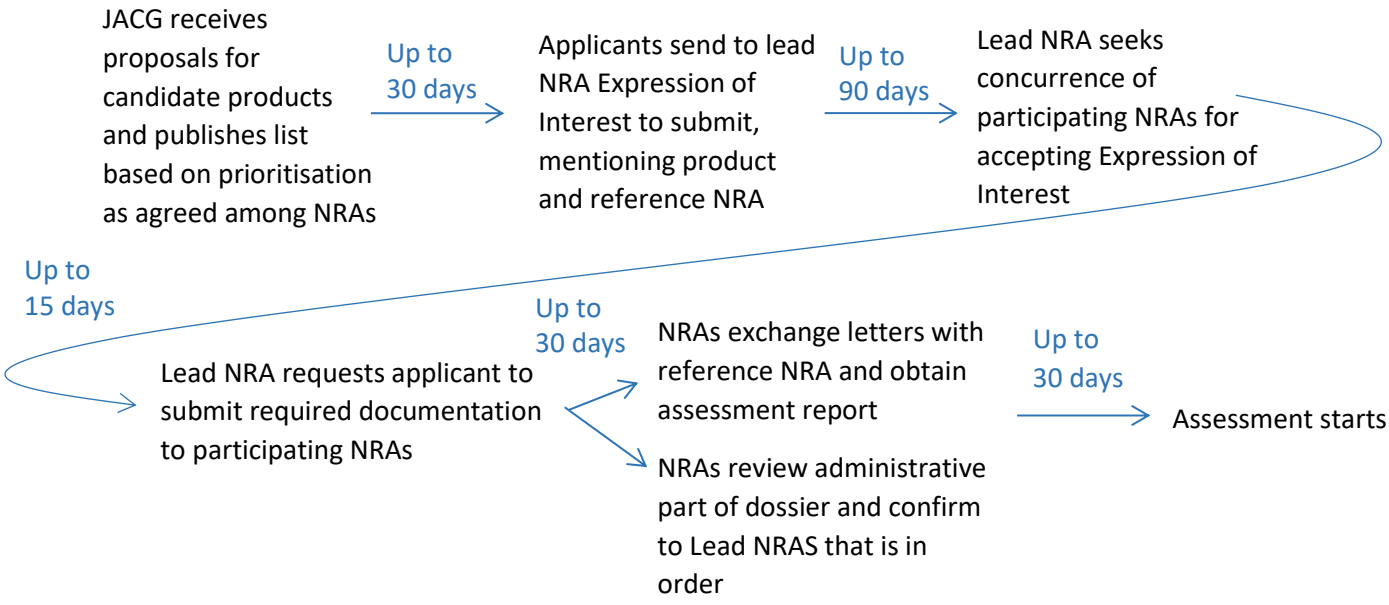
Sharing of JA documentation among AMS

An ASEAN NRA who has not participated in a JA procedure may receive an application for a product that has gone through a JA procedure after this has been finalized. This NRA may request another ASEAN NRA or the ASEAN Secretariat to share the relevant joint assessment report and may decide to rely on such report for its own national decision, if applicable legislation permits. When such

situations arise, concerned applicants will be asked to sign a consent letter to permit such sharing of information.

Steps of JA process

A. ASEAN JA candidate product selection (total up to 195 calendar days)



B. ASEAN Joint assessment process (total up to 180 calendar days; 165 calendar days if JA meeting unnecessary)