

Table 52: Clinical evidence profile: First-line treatment – steroid (oral/IT) versus steroid (oral) [dexamethasone versus prednisolone]

Quality assessment							No of patients		Effect		Quality	Importance
No of studies	Design	Risk of bias	Inconsistency	Indirectness	Imprecision	Other considerations	Dexamethasone	Prednisolone	Relative (95% CI)	Absolute		
PTA Final score (Better indicated by lower values)												
2	randomised trials	serious ¹	no serious inconsistency	no serious indirectness	serious ²	none	53	53	-	MD 6.64 lower (17.58 lower to 4.3 higher)	⊕⊕○○ LOW	CRITICAL
Recovery - symmetrical hearing, interaural hearing difference of <20 dB HL (follow-up 12 months)												
1	randomised trials	very serious ¹	no serious inconsistency	no serious indirectness	very serious ²	none	22/36 (61.1%)	54.3%	RR 1.13 (0.75 to 1.68)	71 more per 1000 (from 136 fewer to 369 more)	⊕○○○ VERY LOW	CRITICAL
Recovery - Recovery of hearing to within 5% points of the contralateral SDS or within 5 dB of the contralateral PTA (follow-up 7 weeks (4 weeks after last injection))												
1	randomised trials	serious ¹	no serious inconsistency	no serious indirectness	very serious ²	none	5/17 (29.4%)	16.7%	RR 1.76 (0.5 to 6.28)	127 more per 1000 (from 84 fewer to 882 more)	⊕○○○ VERY LOW	CRITICAL
Speech discrimination of 100% (recognised all words at their optimum sound level) (follow-up 12 months)												
1	randomised trials	serious ¹	no serious inconsistency	no serious indirectness	very serious ²	none	23/36 (63.9%)	57.1%	RR 1.12 (0.77 to 1.63)	69 more per 1000 (from 131 fewer to 360 more)	⊕○○○ VERY LOW	CRITICAL
Mean speech discrimination (% words successfully discriminated) (follow-up 7 weeks (4 weeks after last injection); Better indicated by lower values)												

1	randomised trials	serious ¹	no serious inconsistency	no serious indirectness	very serious ²	none	17	18	-	MD 6 higher (20.88 lower to 32.88 higher)	⊕○○○ VERY LOW	CRITICAL
---	-------------------	----------------------	--------------------------	-------------------------	---------------------------	------	----	----	---	---	------------------	----------

¹ Downgraded by 1 increment if the majority of the evidence was at high risk of bias, and downgraded by 2 increments if the majority of the evidence was at very high risk of bias.

² Downgraded by 1 increment if the confidence interval crossed one MID or by 2 increments if the confidence interval crossed both MIDs.