

PHARMAC

Pharmaceutical Management Agency

Media release

MORE PEOPLE TO ACCESS ANAEMIA DRUG

The number of people able to have subsidised access to a treatment for anaemia associated with kidney failure is set to nearly double following an agreement between PHARMAC and Roche Products.

Access to erythropoietin-beta (Recormon) will be widened from 1 December 2002. Recormon is used to treat anaemia associated with kidney failure by boosting the red blood cell count.

Currently about 840 people have subsidised access to Recormon, but under the wider access criteria this number is expected to nearly double over the next three years.

Erythropoietin is also used in hospitals to boost red blood cells in people who may otherwise require blood transfusions.

“This is good news for people with a life-threatening condition,” says PHARMAC Chief Executive Wayne McNee.

“Widening access to Recormon will see pharmaceutical expenditure rise by about \$1.1 million per year. However, erythropoietin can help to delay the need for dialysis and kidney transplantation.”

“So although the widening of access involves a cost to the pharmaceutical budget, it can provide savings to hospitals by delaying the need for these other costly interventions.”

The decision, announced during Diabetes Awareness Week, has implications for diabetics who develop kidney failure.

The changes to the criteria had previously been recommended by New Zealand renal physicians and had also received a positive recommendation from the Pharmacology and Therapeutics Advisory Committee (PTAC).

The decision will bring New Zealand in line with the European guidelines for the treatment of chronic renal failure.

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