

PHARMAC

Pharmaceutical Management Agency

Media release

All systems go for dispensing changes

Everything is in place to ensure a smooth transition to new medicine dispensing rules from 1 October, says PHARMAC Chief Executive Wayne McNee.

From 1 October most people will have the added convenience of having to visit the pharmacy less frequently.

The changes mean 71 percent of prescriptions, for the most commonly-used medicines, will be dispensed all-at-once. Controlled medicines or those with safety concerns, such as sleeping pills, some mental health drugs and some of the stronger painkillers, will continue to be dispensed monthly.

PHARMAC, the government drug-funding agency, made the decision after a two-month consultation period, during which it received about 2500 submissions from the public, the pharmaceutical industry and health professionals.

“Many people commented that they found monthly dispensing to be a barrier to accessing all their medicine, so those people will find the new rules a lot more convenient,” Wayne McNee says.

“While convenience is a feature of the new rules, PHARMAC has also recognised that some people need the assistance of a health professional, such as a pharmacist, to manage their medicine. The new rules are flexible to allow this and mean that doctors can write prescriptions for shorter dispensing intervals if they think their patient needs it.”

“This flexibility has been welcomed by medical and patient groups.”

“The decision will also see \$132 million freed up for District Health Boards to fund more health services, which will benefit local communities.”

Since the decision was made, PHARMAC has been working with pharmaceutical suppliers and software companies to ensure supplies and systems are in place by 1 October. Following these discussions, 10 medicines were removed from the all-at-once list.

Information has also been produced for clinicians and patients to tell them about the changes, with posters and brochures available from doctors’ surgeries and pharmacies.

“People with existing prescriptions can continue to collect their repeats until they need a new prescription. They can then discuss how best to obtain their medicine with their doctor,” Wayne McNee says.

“We’re sure most people will find the new rules more convenient and will welcome the flexibility that is now available.”

Further information is available on the PHARMAC website (www.pharmac.govt.nz) or by contacting PHARMAC (between 9am and 4pm) on 0800 66 00 50.

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More information: 021 863 342