

Media release

Cancer patients get new funded treatment

People with an aggressive form of cancer have a new treatment available from today (1 February).

An agreement between Government drug-funding agency PHARMAC and pharmaceutical supplier Roche Products (NZ) Ltd will see rituximab (Mabthera) fully funded for all patients with a form of lymphoma (CD20 positive diffuse large B-cell Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma), when it is used in combination with the existing multiple chemotherapy (known as CHOP).

Rituximab, which is used in hospitals, is already hospital-funded as a treatment for some forms of cancer, but this decision widens its use and will see an additional 120-130 patients treated with it each year.

PHARMAC Chief Executive Wayne McNee says the decision is good news for people with this more aggressive form of lymphoma.

“These are patients with a life-threatening condition who are faced with limited treatment options, so it is pleasing to be able to reach an agreement that will enable them to access this medicine,” Wayne McNee says.

“The evidence we have seen shows that rituximab can extend the lives of these patients, and improve their quality of life, so we’re delighted to be able to provide wider funding.”

Wayne McNee says PHARMAC, DHBs and Roche have worked together to arrive at the funding solution.

Widening access to rituximab is expected to see expenditure on the drug rise by up to \$3.1 million per year.

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Further information: 021 863 342