

# **PHARMAC**

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## Pharmaceutical Management Agency

Media release

### **New treatment for Hepatitis C patients**

A new and more effective combination treatment for people with Hepatitis C is to be funded by Government drug-buying agency PHARMAC.

From 1 March pegylated interferon in combination with ribavirin will be available fully funded. This is a form of therapy that has been shown to have better response rates than the current therapy of standard interferon in combination with ribavirin.

PHARMAC estimates that about 250 people will be able to access the treatment every year, at a cost of up to \$5 million per year.

The decision is a positive one for people with Hepatitis C, says PHARMAC Chief Executive Wayne McNee.

“The data we have seen show that people using the combination pegylated interferon-ribavirin therapy have better response rates than people using standard therapy, so we consider this to be a step forward for people with Hepatitis C,” Wayne McNee says.

“We will be targeting the treatment to the largest identifiable group, which is also the hardest group to treat using the standard therapy. We also expect that improving treatment will have downstream benefits in other areas of the health sector, such as reducing the demand for liver transplants as a result of Hepatitis C infection.”

Wayne McNee says PHARMAC will also be looking to secure supply for other groups of patients with Hepatitis C under a separate process.

“We will be running a request for proposals to make this new treatment even more widely available,” he says.

PHARMAC will be funding pegylated interferon combined with ribavirin following an agreement with the pharmaceutical company Roche Products (NZ) Ltd.

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