

# PHARMAC

## Pharmaceutical Management Agency

Media release

### **More patients to access mental health drug**

More people are set to access the antipsychotic treatment olanzapine, and a new presentation of the drug is being subsidised following a decision by government drug-funding agency PHARMAC.

Olanzapine (Zyprexa) is one of the group of medicines known as atypical antipsychotics, and is already fully subsidised for patients with schizophrenia. Olanzapine will now also be available fully funded for the treatment of acute mania in bipolar disorder. And in addition, a dissolvable wafer form of olanzapine will be added to the Pharmaceutical Schedule as a further treatment option.

The wider access and listing of olanzapine wafers (Zyprexa Zydis) follow an agreement with pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly.

Olanzapine is the second-most prescribed of the atypical antipsychotic drugs, says PHARMAC Chief Executive Wayne McNee, and used by over 4000 people a year.

“Having olanzapine subsidised for bipolar patients gives specialist clinicians another effective treatment option,” Wayne McNee says.

“It’s pleasing to be able to help meet what is a government health priority. Funding olanzapine for bipolar patients will help reduce the time they spend in hospital and help them return to the community faster.”

“The listing of olanzapine wafers provides a useful treatment option, particularly for those patients who have trouble taking tablets.”

Access will be widened and the wafer form of olanzapine listed from 1 September 2004.

ENDS

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