

PHARMAC

Pharmaceutical Management Agency

Media release

Treatment options for severe pain enhanced

Patients with severe pain are to have a new treatment option.

From 1 October 2004 PHARMAC will fully fund fentanyl (Durogesic) patches for seriously ill patients who are morphine-intolerant.

Fentanyl is an opioid-based analgesic treatment, administered in the form of patches which deliver the drug through the skin. It is an alternative to the traditional “gold standard” pain relief for the terminally ill, morphine, and is aimed at patients who have become intolerant of morphine or who have difficulty swallowing.

Medical Director Dr Peter Moodie says PHARMAC’s focus on investing in medicines means health professionals working in palliative care have a further tool to help manage their patients’ pain.

“For patients with severe pain, particularly cancer patients, ensuring they are pain-free is a paramount consideration,” Dr Moodie says.

“Morphine is still the most important drug in relieving cancer pain. However, having fentanyl available will enable health professionals to continue managing pain should the patient become intolerant to morphine or unable to swallow.”

Fentanyl will be listed under Special Authority that will see up to 3000 patients each year accessing the drug.

PHARMAC anticipates spending up to \$3 million per year on fentanyl.

Listing fentanyl is the 11th new product added to the Pharmaceutical Schedule in 2004.

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