

# PHARMAC

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## Pharmaceutical Management Agency

*Media Release*

### **New treatment to let patients breathe easier**

People with a severe form of respiratory disease will have a new fully subsidised treatment from 1 February 2005.

Tiotropium (Spiriva) will be funded from 1 February for people suffering from the respiratory conditions known as COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), following a decision by Government drug-funding agency PHARMAC.

COPD includes such conditions as emphysema and chronic bronchitis. They cause breathlessness and restricts people's ability to go about their daily lives.

Expenditure will be significant, totalling more than \$33 million over five years. This will be partially offset (nearly 40 percent) by savings from an anticipated reduction in people with COPD being admitted to hospital, while PHARMAC also has a confidential risk-sharing agreement with the supplier of tiotropium, Boehringer Ingelheim.

PHARMAC Chief Executive Wayne McNee says tiotropium will provide an advance on those treatments that are already available fully funded, and has been supported by a recommendation from the Pharmacology and Therapeutics Advisory Committee (PTAC) and its respiratory sub-committee.

Tiotropium is an inhaled powder taken once a day by people suffering from COPD.

“People suffering from this debilitating condition will be able to control their symptoms better through using tiotropium,” Wayne McNee says. “Tiotropium will help them to breathe easier and cope better with the demands of everyday life. It can also help keep them out of hospital, which is great news for patients.”

“This is a treatment that is better from both the patient's and the clinician's perspective, so we're pleased to be able to make a positive funding decision.”

Wayne McNee says tiotropium will initially be targeted at people with the most severe forms of COPD, which will see about 16,000 people taking the treatment long-term within five years.

PHARMAC has also agreed to consider widening access to people with less severe forms of COPD, subject to a positive review by PTAC.

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For more information call (021) 436-429