

PHARMAC

Pharmaceutical Management Agency

Media release

Asthma Foundation company wins tender for asthma inhaler

The subsidised blue inhaler used by tens of thousands of New Zealanders with asthma is about to undergo a brand change – and an asthma charity is set to gain the benefits.

Government drug-funding agency PHARMAC has agreed to subsidise the Salamol brand of salbutamol, the most commonly-used inhaler to treat the onset of asthma symptoms, from 1 February 2005. Salamol is CFC-free and supplied by Air Flow Products, a subsidiary company of the Asthma and Respiratory Foundation of NZ, and will replace the Ventolin brand from 1 April 2005.

Air Flow already supplies beclomethasone, a type of asthma preventer inhaler.

PHARMAC Medical Director Dr Peter Moodie says salbutamol is an important part of asthma treatment, and is used by large numbers of New Zealanders.

“We will be supplying information to doctors to keep them informed about the change, so that they can help patients change to the new brand,” Dr Moodie says.

“Salamol is supplied in a blue inhaler that will already be familiar to people using salbutamol. So apart from a slight difference in size (Salamol is smaller), people who use salbutamol to relieve their asthma symptoms should not notice any difference in their medicine.”

The decision to list Salamol, which accounts for more than 20 percent of the salbutamol dispensed in the UK, will enable savings of about \$1.7 million up to June 2006.

Salbutamol is one of the most commonly prescribed medicines in New Zealand, with people using over 1.4 million inhalers in the year to June 2004.

[ends]

For more information call (021) 429-212