

# PHARMAC

## Pharmaceutical Management Agency

Media release

### **More people to get transplant drug**

People who have had kidney or heart transplants will be able to have ongoing access to the anti-rejection drug mycophenolate from 1 October, Government drug-funder PHARMAC announced today.

The access widening comes after an 18-month review of transplant immunosuppressant drugs, which included the establishment of a specialist sub-committee to make recommendations in this therapeutic area, says PHARMAC's chief executive Wayne McNee.

The review sub-committee recommended giving heart transplant patients access to mycophenolate, and also identified groups of kidney transplant patients to extend access to.

However, Wayne McNee says the agreement that PHARMAC and the drug's supplier Roche have reached enables access to be widened even further while still implementing the recommendations of the review sub-committee.

"After reviewing access and talking to the supplier we have been able to provide ongoing access to all kidney transplant patients," Wayne McNee says. "And we have gone further and extended the subsidy for mycophenolate to heart transplant patients as well."

"It is good news for transplant patients that we have been able to reach this outcome."

"While azathioprine will continue to be subsidised as a treatment option, we expect most kidney and heart transplant patients will receive ongoing treatment with mycophenolate."

From 1 October, all patients commenced on subsidised mycophenolate will be able to have it indefinitely.

And in another feature of the agreement with Roche, the oral liquid form of mycophenolate will also be listed on the Pharmaceutical Schedule. This is another product requested by clinicians and will be mainly used to treat children.

Up to about 120 kidney transplant operations take place in New Zealand each year, with 10-20 people receiving heart transplants. Wayne McNee says that nearly all these patients will be treated with mycophenolate, at a cost to the pharmaceutical budget of about \$8 million over 5 years.

The decision is the latest funding announcement by PHARMAC and follows decisions to widen access to the diabetes medicine pioglitazone, the breast cancer medicines known as aromatase inhibitors, and to list the injected form of the antipsychotic medicine risperidone.

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