

PHARMAC

Pharmaceutical Management Agency

Media release

2 new treatments funded for Parkinson's disease

Two new treatments will be subsidised from 1 November for people with Parkinson's disease, government drug-funder PHARMAC announced today.

Ropinirole (Requip) and entacapone (Comtan) provide alternatives to treatments that are already funded, but which can cause serious side effects in some patients.

Ropinirole provides an alternative to drugs such as pergolide, which may increase the risk of heart valve problems for some patients, while entacapone can be used in place of tolcapone, which needs close monitoring of liver function by a specialist.

PHARMAC Chief Executive Wayne McNee says listing the two drugs is good news for people with Parkinson's disease, and adds to the 12 treatments already funded.

"We're pleased to be able to make more funded options available," says Wayne McNee.

"The treatments that are already subsidised will continue to be effective and used by a considerable number of patients. But these decisions mean there will now be more funded options available, which is good news for patients and clinicians."

Ropinirole is a dopamine agonist that acts to reduce the symptoms of Parkinson's disease, including tremors (shaking) and slowness of movement. It can be taken on its own.

Entacapone is only used as a combination treatment. It acts to increase the duration that levodopa-based treatments are effective.

Wayne McNee says there are about 12,000 people taking subsidised anti-Parkinson's agents, although only about 2000 of these are taking the comparable treatments to those being listed on 1 November.

PHARMAC estimates the new treatments will add \$2.4 million to pharmaceutical spending over the next five years.

The decisions are the latest announced by PHARMAC as it continues its new investments programme. Recent decisions including widening access to salmeterol for asthma, alendronate for osteoporosis, mycophenolate for transplants, and the aromatase inhibitors for breast cancer.

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