

PHARMAC

Pharmaceutical Management Agency

Media release

PHARMAC disappointed at drug company decision

PHARMAC is disappointed at the knee-jerk reaction of a drug multinational that will deprive New Zealanders of a medicine to treat prostate cancer and breast cancer, Chief Executive Wayne McNee says.

The decision by Anglo-Swedish drug giant AstraZeneca to withdraw its drug goserelin from New Zealand shows a woeful disregard for the needs of patients, Wayne McNee says.

PHARMAC continues to fully fund leuprorelin, a therapeutically equivalent alternative to gosarelin.

Wayne McNee says PHARMAC sought advice from its expert clinical committee PTAC, which found there were no risks associated with continuing to reference price the GnRH analogue therapeutic group.

“This is a short-sighted decision by one of the world’s most profitable drug companies,” Wayne McNee says, noting that AstraZeneca has reported profits of \$US1.23 billion in the last financial quarter.

“We are already paying almost 30% more than the UK for some strengths of goserelin. PHARMAC is simply seeking a fair deal for the New Zealand taxpayer.”

“AstraZeneca tried to argue that their drug was superior to leuprorelin, but they couldn’t produce the evidence to support their claim, and the higher price they were seeking to justify it. We provided Astra’s information among a wealth of information for PTAC consideration.

“This is a good decision based on a robust and thorough look at the evidence.”

The subsidy paid for the 3.6mg strength of gosarelin will not be reducing, however, AstraZeneca is withdrawing this strength as well.

Goserelin 3.6mg is also used to treat breast cancer. Leuprorelin was approved for use in breast cancer patients in October 2005.

ENDS