

Media release

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Brand change for ADHD medication

New Zealanders taking long-acting methylphenidate – mostly children with the behavioural condition Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) – will see a change in the brand of their medication from 1 November.

Another *long acting* form of methylphenidate (Rubifen) will be funded in addition to the currently funded brand Ritalin. Both will be funded until 1 April 2007 when Rubifen will become the sole subsidised brand.

The transition period – November until April – will allow doctors, patients and caregivers to adjust to a change to long-acting Rubifen.

The change will mean that from 1 April 2007, Rubifen will be the only brand of short and long-acting methylphenidate that is subsidised.

PHARMAC's Medical Director Dr Peter Moodie says that more than 6000 people already use *short-acting* Rubifen and, as such, it is a very well known brand.

Overall there are about 10,400 people prescribed methylphenidate each year. Methylphenidate is also prescribed for narcolepsy, a neurological disorder that makes people prone to fall asleep.

Dr Moodie says while people may notice that long acting Rubifen tablets look different and the packaging is slightly different to Ritalin, these should be the only changes they notice.

Dr Moodie says: "We are confident that both brands of the long-acting tablets provide the same clinical effect. PHARMAC needs to carefully consider the risks of changing peoples' medication. We are satisfied that change is very acceptable in this instance."

"A long transition period has also been provided for doctors, patients and caregivers to become well informed about the change. To further assist this, support materials are also being provided. "

PHARMAC's decisions also make a wider range of doses available for short-acting Rubifen. This will allow doctors to tailor treatment more accurately and make more efficient use of PHARMAC's funding in this area.

Dr Moodie says changes in this area will save around \$3 million over three years, freeing up that funding for use on other medications.

Access criteria for both the long and short acting methylphenidate remain unchanged.

Prescribing data released

Methylphenidate is available in two dosage forms and many people are prescribed both the 10 mg (short acting) and 20 mg (long acting) forms, Dr Moodie says. Analysis of the data shows that on an annual basis:

- approximately 6500 people are prescribed short-acting methylphenidate
- approximately 8300 people are prescribed long acting methylphenidate
- approximately 10,400 people in total are prescribed methylphenidate (in all forms)

Dr Moodie says that while PHARMAC has noticed an increase in the rate of methylphenidate prescribing in past years, the rate of increase now appears to be flattening off.

“The prescribing trend we now see is a continuing increase but more in line with overall population growth. This is the sort of trend that we would expect to see continue.”

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