

# PHARMAC

Pharmaceutical Management Agency

***Media release***

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## **HIV treatment takes two steps forward**

A once-a-day medicine to attack the HIV/AIDS virus is part of a package of treatments for people with HIV announced by Pharmac today.

Atazanavir (Reyataz) is a once a day HIV protease inhibitor which has the advantage of having fewer metabolic side effects than other protease inhibitor drugs. These side effects can cause complications like heart disease.

The other part of the package is the listing of pravastatin (Pravachol), a cholesterol-lowering drug that can be used to correct metabolic side effects in people with HIV who are being treated with protease inhibitors. Two statins are already funded, atorvastatin and simvastatin. However, pravastatin is the only one that can be used in combination with HIV protease inhibitors.

Both treatments will be funded from today (1 November 2006).

PHARMAC Medical Director Dr Peter Moodie says the two drugs provide the opportunity to advance treatment for HIV patients.

“By and large people can manage their HIV well with the drug treatments that are available,” Dr Moodie says. “It is not uncommon, though, for people who are taking protease inhibitors to have metabolic complications such as increased triglyceride and cholesterol levels. These can lead to an increased risk of heart disease so these funding decisions provide welcome new treatment options,” Dr Moodie says.

“Having a once-a-day protease inhibitor will mean that people who might find it difficult to take all their medicines in one day will have a better treatment option.”

Dr Moodie says the decision to subsidise atazanavir will benefit an estimated 40-50 people with HIV each year. About 30 people would benefit from pravastatin.

Atazanavir will join five other fully subsidised HIV protease inhibitors. Another treatment for HIV/AIDS, enfuvirtide, has also been funded recently.

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