

PHARMAC

Pharmaceutical Management Agency

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PHARMAC assures New Zealanders of robust processes around Herceptin

PHARMAC is continuing to follow its processes around considering funding of breast cancer drug Herceptin – and no further decision has been made.

Acting Medical Director Dr Dilky Rasiah says it is very disappointing that National MP Jackie Blue is leading people to think that PHARMAC has made up its mind.

“PHARMAC is continuing to work hard on considering Herceptin, and it is going through the same robust processes of other funding decisions.”

Dr Rasiah says any decision needs to be carefully considered based on detailed scientific evidence, including independent advice from clinical experts.

“As with any funding decision, the responsible approach is to follow proper process, including seeking expert clinical advice and carefully considering all options. In any funding decision, it would be irresponsible for PHARMAC not to consider all options.”

Recent articles in independent medical journals regarding Herceptin note the legitimacy of considering both the nine-week and 12-month treatments.

Dr Rasiah says PHARMAC has been open about the fact that it has looked at the nine-week dosing regimen as an option for some time.

“When PHARMAC decided not to fund Herceptin in July 2006 on the basis of evidence at that time, we explicitly stated that we remained open to considering all options, including the 9-week option and any new evidence related to the 12-month option. We are therefore surprised that Ms Blue has raised the 9-week option as being something new. But let’s be clear, no further decision on Herceptin has been made.”

She says while respecting Ms Blue’s right to form her own views, it is disappointing when public comment is not properly informed.

“PHARMAC has made a number of offers for Ms Blue, given her interest in medicines funding, to check her information with us. PHARMAC will continue to make itself available.”

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