

PHARMAC

Pharmaceutical Management Agency

Media release

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Two new medicines funded for people with HIV

PHARMAC will fund two new medicines to treat HIV from 1 April 2007.

Tenofovir (Viread) and emtricitabine (Emtriva) are comparatively new treatments that have similar actions to anti-HIV medicines that are already funded. However, they have some advantages over already-funded medicines and are important because the HIV virus can become resistant to existing treatments.

Subsidising tenofovir and emtricitabine is an investment of approximately \$1.5 million over five years. PHARMAC estimates that up to 159 people would be eligible for treatment with tenofovir and/or emtricitabine within three years.

PHARMAC's Medical Director Dr Peter Moodie says the two medicines will be used together, or individually, in combination with other anti-HIV treatments.

"Our clinical advisory committee PTAC considered that evidence demonstrates that tenofovir plus emtricitabine is more effective than the currently-funded Combivir (zidovudine plus lamivudine), in people who have not previously had HIV treatment," says Dr Moodie.

"Tenofovir also has some advantages over similar drugs that are already funded. It only needs to be taken once a day and has fewer metabolic side effects, which may benefit particular patient groups."

PHARMAC currently funds four classes of antiretroviral drugs. Tenofovir is one of the class known as nucleotide reverse transcriptase inhibitors.

In recent months, PHARMAC has approved funding for Kivexa (a combination treatment) Fuzeon (the first fusion inhibitor, a new class of anti-HIV drug) and Reyataz (a new type of protease inhibitor).

Dr Moodie says tenofovir will also be of use for people who are taking Fuzeon, which must be administered with "optimised background therapy", including at least one new anti-HIV drug.

Approximately 700 people diagnosed with Human Immuno-deficiency Virus (HIV) in New Zealand are receiving antiretroviral therapy.

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