

PHARMAC

Pharmaceutical Management Agency

Media release

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Optimal use of medicines a key challenge for 2008 - PHARMAC

The challenge of getting the best from funded medicines – “optimal use” – is looming as a key issue for 2008.

In launching its 2007 Annual Review, Government drug funder PHARMAC says there is much to gain for the health system from a stronger focus on ensuring medicines aren't overused, underused or misused.

“In debate over medicines funding, discussion often tends to focus on new pharmaceuticals. But there is much to be gained from better using the medicines that are currently available,” says Marama Parore, PHARMAC's Manager, Access and Optimal Use, and Manager Maori Health. “This starts from ensuring medicines are prescribed at the right time to the right people, and that people understand how to take their medicines safely and appropriately.

“We know from looking at prescribing patterns across the country that there are inconsistencies in use, and these need to be addressed.”

PHARMAC has established a strong track record in optimal use initiatives, with campaigns like Wise Use of Antibiotics, One Heart Many Lives, and the Maori Use of Medicines project, He Rongoa Pai, He Oranga Whanau.

“All these projects share the theme of making the best use of funded medicines which, in some cases, means more medicines (such as statins for lowering cholesterol levels) or sometimes not using medicines at all,” says Marama Parore. “PHARMAC, with its expertise in medicines and national focus, is well placed to continue a lead role in this ‘optimal use’ area.”

Marama Parore says PHARMAC has been promoting the responsible use of medicines for a decade with good success. This year the longest-running campaign, Wise Use of Antibiotics, entered a new phase with the use of animated television commercials. Analysis of prescribing patterns shows a shift in the ratio of simple amoxicillin, compared to the more complex amoxicillin particularly among children, which is in line with the aims of the campaign.

The One Heart Many Lives cardiovascular campaign grows from strength to strength – Northland has now embraced the concept, building on the Hawke's Bay successes where innovative approaches have raised awareness and reached men (in particular) at risk of suffering from cardiovascular disease.

[more]

2/optimal use

PHARMAC's team working in this area has been renamed from 'Demand Side' to 'Access and Optimal Use' to better reflect the nature of the work, but the core role hasn't changed.

"It's still addressing areas of high need, and where medicines usage has got out of step with best practice."

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