

PHARMAC

Pharmaceutical Management Agency

Media release

29 November, 2007

New Zealanders getting more funded prescriptions than ever

Prescriptions for funded medicines have risen to an all-time high, figures from Government drug-funder PHARMAC show.

PHARMAC's 2007 Annual Review shows that, during 2006–07, close to 32 million prescriptions were subsidised, a rise of 11.8 percent on the previous year. It means an extra 3.3 million prescriptions were subsidised during the past year.

Medical Director Dr Peter Moodie says the biggest factor contributing to the rise is the Government's policies on access to primary care, such as cheaper doctor visits and reduced medicines co-payments.

PHARMAC estimates these policy changes alone led to an increase of between 1.4 and 1.8 million prescriptions, compared with the previous year. This represented some 45% of the increase in prescriptions.

Other factors included underlying prescribing (contributing 22% of the increase), funding of low dose aspirin (19%) and population growth (13%).

At the same time, PHARMAC grew the list of funded medicines, adding 11 new medicines and widening access to 28 more, and funding was within 0.1% of the budget.

"The access policies have lowered the cost for people to access medical care, and we are seeing this come through very strongly in the prescribing figures," says Dr Moodie.

In addition, significant investments were made for diabetes, asthma, HIV/AIDS, cancer and heart disease.

"These are all areas of high health need where new pharmaceutical technologies are becoming available," says Dr Moodie.

"New spending decisions in 2006-07 saw an estimated 19,700 new patients treated with subsidised medicines."

"This number will increase significantly in coming years as many of the new medicines listed have not yet been subsidised for a full year."

Dr Moodie says that, in looking at new funding opportunities, PHARMAC has continued to be careful to ensure that it is getting the best health outcomes from the available funding.

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Highlights from PHARMAC'S Annual Review

Prescribers wrote 31.92 million subsidised prescriptions
At least 2.69 million people had their medicine subsidised
Prescriptions rose by 11.8% or 3.3 million prescriptions
11 new medicines were funded
Pharmaceutical spending was 0.1% within budget at \$599.37 million

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