

PHARMAC

Pharmaceutical Management Agency

17 August 2008

Media release

New treatment option for persistent migraines

People having trouble controlling persistent migraines will have a new treatment option from 1 September.

PHARMAC is widening access to topiramate (Topamax), an existing funded treatment for epilepsy, so that it can also be used to prevent migraines. This is the second new treatment option for migraine sufferers that PHARMAC has provided this year.

The widening of access to topiramate means it will also now be funded as a first-line treatment for epilepsy.

PHARMAC's Acting Medical Director Dr Dilky Rasiah says that, with the relatively large number of treatments available for people with migraines, and the drug's side-effects, topiramate is likely to be used a "last resort" for people with migraines.

"People who have experienced migraines know just how debilitating these can be, and people respond differently to different treatments," she says. "What we have seen is that topiramate can cut back the recurrence of migraines by about 45% on average.

"To a non-migraine sufferer that may not seem a lot, but these are people who can suffer migraines frequently and know just how severe it can be."

Dr Rasiah says it's difficult to estimate the number of people who will be prescribed topiramate as a result of the decision, but estimates show about 2700 people will be treated with topiramate (epilepsy and migraine) this year, rising to 4700 by 2011.

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For more information contact 021 436 429.