

# Role of the Pharmacology & Therapeutics Advisory Committee (PTAC)



**PTAC** Pharmacology and Therapeutics  
Advisory Committee

## Medical Advice

Advice from doctors is an important part of PHARMAC's decisions on medicines funding. This advice is received in a number of ways, including through expert committees. PHARMAC also keeps up to date with the latest clinical information, through ongoing professional development, and monitoring of trial results and journal articles.

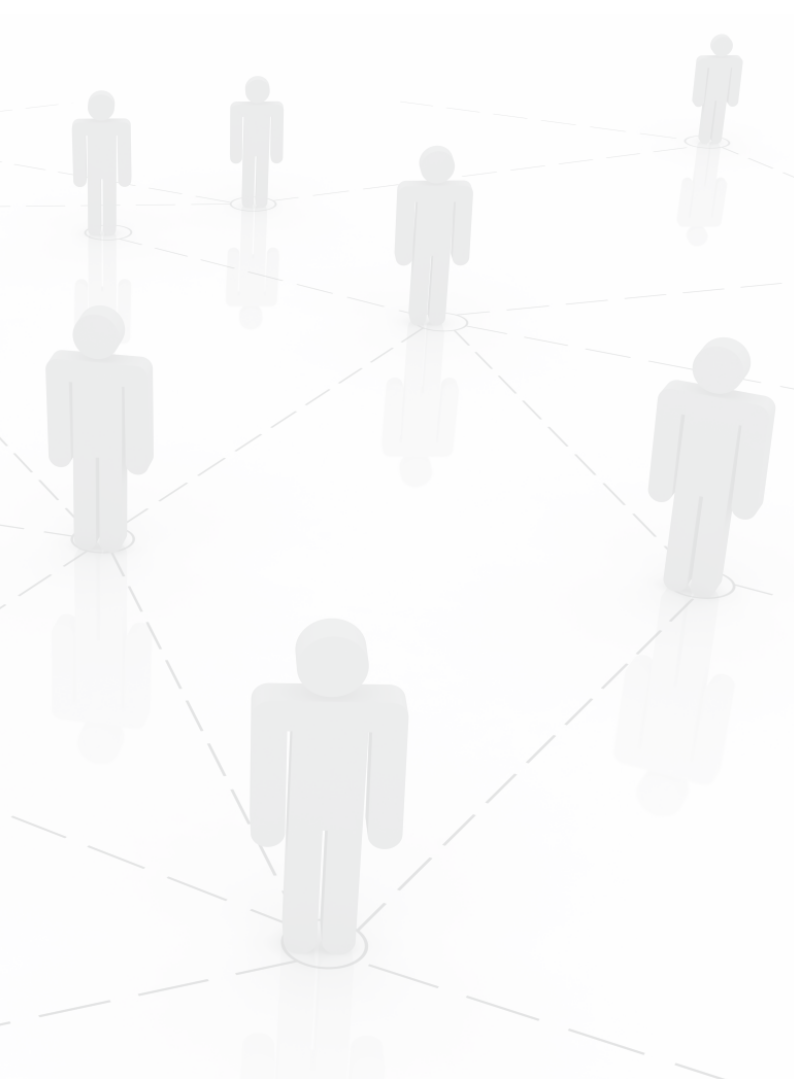
## PTAC

Our main clinical advice comes from an expert committee of doctors, the Pharmacology and Therapeutics Advisory Committee (PTAC). PTAC has been part of the health system since 1941 and, in 1993, began providing advice to PHARMAC.

## PTAC's role & relationship to PHARMAC

PTAC provides objective advice to PHARMAC about changes to the Pharmaceutical Schedule, taking into account all nine Decision Criteria used by PHARMAC.

1. The health needs of all eligible people;
2. The particular health needs of Maori and Pacific peoples;
3. The availability and suitability of existing medicines, therapeutic medical devices and related products and related things;
4. The clinical benefits and risks of pharmaceuticals;
5. The cost-effectiveness of meeting health needs by funding pharmaceuticals rather than using other publicly funded health and disability support services;
6. The budgetary impact (in terms of the pharmaceutical budget and the Government's overall health budget) of any changes to the Schedule;
7. The direct cost to health service users;
8. The Government's priorities for health funding, as set out in any objectives notified by the Crown to PHARMAC, or in PHARMAC's Funding Agreement, or elsewhere; and
9. Such other criteria as PHARMAC thinks fit.



PTAC usually has 10 members, who are experts in examining clinical studies and have broad experience and knowledge of medicines and the conditions they treat. PTAC usually meets four times a year and the Chair of PTAC attends monthly PHARMAC Board meetings as an observer, and to share PTAC's views directly with the Board.

PTAC makes recommendations to PHARMAC, and these are one of the things we use to help us make decisions. PTAC operates under defined Terms of Reference.

## How are PTAC members appointed?

Members are appointed by the Director-General of the Ministry of Health. Membership terms are usually three years and may be renewed. The process for appointing members is explained in an Appointment Protocol.

## What does PTAC take into account when providing advice?

PTAC considers the same nine Decision Criteria as the PHARMAC Board when making recommendations. Some stakeholders have argued that PTAC should focus exclusively on clinical effectiveness, since that is its major expertise. As clinicians, however, PTAC members are also concerned with, and can usefully comment on, the other Decision Criteria which include cost and opportunity cost, health inequalities and health need.

## Clinical Subcommittees

There are a number of subcommittees who provide more specialised advice to PTAC and PHARMAC on clinical areas such as cancer, diabetes, mental health, cardiovascular, and neurology. These subcommittees are a significant resource of over 50 health professionals providing expert clinical input into PHARMAC's assessment of funding applications. They also help us to be aware of issues and concerns that doctors and health professionals are dealing with.

PHARMAC subcommittees	
Analgesia	Anti-infective
Cardiac Stents	Cardiovascular
Cancer Treatments (CaTSoP)	Diabetes
Dialysis Fluids	Hormone & Contraceptive
Mental Health	Neurological
Ophthalmology	Osteoporosis
Respiratory	Special Foods
Tender Medical	Woundcare

## Other clinical input

### PHARMAC staff

PHARMAC employs people with clinical expertise – in medical practice, pharmacy or the science of pharmacology. A number of PHARMAC's staff have experience in medical or scientific fields.

### Applications from Health Professionals

The views of health professionals are important to PHARMAC whenever we consult on funding decisions. We keep in regular touch with health professionals through formal consultation on proposals, or as a result of contact or correspondence from individual clinicians, pharmacists or professional associations.

We also receive applications from clinicians seeking funding for medicines, and these can be taken to PTAC for consideration.

PHARMAC is the Government agency that decides, on behalf of District Health Boards (DHBs), which medicines get subsidised so that they are more affordable for New Zealanders and available nationally. The subsidies PHARMAC sets are funded from a fixed budget that is part of DHB funding. PHARMAC also promotes the optimal use of medicines, carries out some procurement for DHBs, and manages special access programmes for some medicines.

Information Sheets on various PHARMAC topics are available from our website: [www.pharmac.govt.nz/patients/infosheets](http://www.pharmac.govt.nz/patients/infosheets)

If you have specific areas of interest (such as consultations, committees or vacancies), visit our website and subscribe to news feeds in the area(s) of interest to you: <http://pharmac.govt.nz/feeds>

### Contacting Us

Call us on 0800 66 00 50 (between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday), or on 04 460 4990 (between 8am and 5.30pm, Monday to Friday).

Write to us at: PHARMAC, PO Box 10 254, Wellington  
– we respond to all letters

Email us at [enquiries@pharmac.govt.nz](mailto:enquiries@pharmac.govt.nz) – we respond to all emails