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Media release

PHARMAC confirms 1 November funding date for Alzheimer's treatment

PHARMAC has confirmed people with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia will have funded access to donepezil from 1 November.

The confirmed funding date follows the Donepezil-Rex brand being approved by the Government regulator Medsafe.

PHARMAC Medical Director Dr Peter Moodie says it is now a matter of sufficient stock being ordered and delivered to supply demand for the product. To give sufficient time for this to occur, PHARMAC and Rex Medical have agreed a 1 November subsidy date.

Donepezil is one of the acetylcholinesterase inhibitor group of medicines, specifically used to treat Alzheimer's disease and related types of dementia. None of these treatments are currently funded in New Zealand.

Dr Moodie says PHARMAC has had a number of queries from people following earlier publicity that funding had been agreed.

"We appreciate that people are seeking funded access to donepezil and we thank them for their patience," he says. "It was always a matter of following the proper process and waiting for Medsafe to do its job first. Now that has happened, we are pleased to confirm the subsidy date as 1 November."

PHARMAC agreed to fund donepezil following a competitive process which led to a significant price reduction. PHARMAC will be paying about 5% of the price of other brands of donepezil.

Donepezil is being funded without restrictions, meaning it can be prescribed and funded for anyone with Alzheimer's disease or other types of dementia.

PHARMAC estimates that donepezil will be used by about 15,000 people after three years, at a cost of approximately \$680,000 per year.

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