

Pharmaceutical Management Agency

Clinicians' Newsletter



*“Make life easier,
always think generically”*

July 2011

Changes to Schedule subscriptions

Later this year PHARMAC will be making subscription changes to the Pharmaceutical Schedule. These changes will mean that, if you want to continue to receive a printed copy of the Schedule, you will be charged for it. Online and email versions of the Schedule will continue to be provided free of charge and we will be improving the functionality of the online Schedule on the PHARMAC website.

Hard copies will cost \$55.00 per annum for the community Schedule. This fee does not represent full cost recovery, but a contribution towards the cost of printing and postage.

We will shortly announce when the new fees will apply and how to activate your free e-mail subscription and/or the paid hard copy subscription. Subscriptions will be managed via a secure website, links to which will be via the PHARMAC website.

New Listings

Dabigatran

Dabigatran (Pradaxa) is a direct thrombin inhibitor and is an approved treatment for the indications of atrial fibrillation and venous thromboembolism (VTE) prophylaxis following major orthopaedic surgery. Over time, we expect dabigatran will largely replace warfarin as the treatment of choice for these uses.

Patients who should remain on warfarin are those with mechanical heart valves, severe valvular disease requiring anticoagulation, long term treatment for deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism, or severe renal impairment (<30ml/min creatinine clearance).

Dabigatran 75 mg, 110 mg and 150 mg capsules (Pradaxa) will be fully subsidised with no Special Authority restrictions from 1 July 2011. Pradaxa will initially be provided in a bottle presentation, which has a shelf-life of 30 days once opened, but we are working with the supplier to introduce a blister packaging.

Best Practice Advocacy Centre (bpac) will be putting together a series of educational activities for clinicians including articles in the Best Practice Journal (BPJ). The first article was included in the June 2011 edition of BPJ and is available on their website. With the help of a group of clinicians, PHARMAC has also facilitated the development of hospital guidelines for the management of bleeding whilst on dabigatran and its management perioperatively. These guidelines are available on the PHARMAC website.

For further information regarding treating patients on dabigatran, go to: www.pharmac.govt.nz/healthpros/MedicineInformation/Dabigatran



Olanzapine depot injection

Olanzapine depot injection will be funded for patients with schizophrenia who are non compliant with oral medications and who have been admitted to hospital or treated in respite care, or intensive outpatient or home-based treatment, for 30 days or more in the last 12 months. Injections of 210 mg, 300 mg and 405 mg will be funded subject to Special Authority restrictions from 1 July 2011.

Patients should be monitored for post-injection syndrome for at least three hours after each injection.

Osteoporosis treatments – two new listings and amendment to restrictions

Raloxifene (Evista) will be funded for patients with osteoporosis subject to Special Authority restrictions similar to those that currently apply to alendronate and zoledronic acid from 1 July 2011. Changes have also been made to the Special Authority criteria for alendronate and zoledronic acid to ensure that patients who receive an approval for raloxifene will be able to access alendronate and zoledronic acid. Raloxifene comes in 60 mg tablets.

Also from 1 July 2011, teriparatide (Forteo) injection 250 µg per ml, 2.4 ml, will be funded subject to Special Authority restrictions as a last-line treatment for osteoporosis.

Widening of Access

Fluconazole 150 mg capsules

From 1 June 2011 fluconazole 150 mg capsules were taken off specialist restriction. Any practitioner from 1 June 2011 has been able to prescribe one fluconazole 150 mg capsule for patients with vaginal candida albicans; however, the prescription needs to be endorsed.

Fluconazole 150 mg capsules will not be funded in amounts greater than one capsule per prescription, even if prescribed by or on the recommendation of a specialist.

For prescriptions greater than one day (written by or on the recommendation of a specialist) the 50mg capsule must be dispensed. If the dose is written using the 150mg capsule pharmacists are able to change the dispensing to the 50 mg capsules. The prescriber does not need to be contacted as it is not a change in dose and there is no extra cost to the DHB.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) – addition to Practitioners Supply Order (PSO) list

All strengths and flavours (where relevant) of nicotine patches, lozenges and gum will be available on a PSO from 1 July 2011. Note that the PSO may only be used to ensure medical supplies for emergency use, teaching and demonstration purposes, and for the provision to certain patient groups where individual prescription is not practicable. We expect the main use of NRT obtained on a PSO would be for teaching and demonstration purposes. Patients will still need to obtain prescriptions or Quit Cards for funded NRT.

Restriction of access to Symbicort and Oxis

Symbicort Turbuhaler and Oxis Turbuhaler– changes to subsidy for new patients

From 1 July 2011, a part charge will apply to all new patients prescribed budesonide with eformoterol powder for inhalation (Symbicort Turbuhaler), and eformoterol fumarate powder for inhalation 6µg (Oxis Turbuhaler). Existing patients will continue to be fully funded with endorsement.

Patients who have been prescribed Symbicort or Oxis before the 1st July 2011 will be able to continue with full subsidy provided they have a valid special authority AND the script is endorsed with the information that they started or were prescribed the drug(s) before that date. If you forget to do this the pharmacist may add this endorsement providing they have documented evidence on their systems that they qualify.

This will unfortunately need to be in place for a few months while we decide on the options for ongoing management of subsidies for these pharmaceuticals.

Please let your existing Symbicort and Oxis patients know that they do not need to pay anything extra for their medicines. Some pharmacies will need to manually override their systems to enable the full subsidy to apply and if that does not occur, your patient maybe be inadvertently charged a part charge.

Fully funded alternatives include:

- > Budesonide with eformoterol MDI (Vannair)
- > Fluticasone with salmeterol Accuhaler and MDI (Seretide)
- > Salmeterol Accuhaler and MDI (Serevent)
- > Eformoterol fumarate (Foradil)

Other Changes

Varenicline (Champix) – clarification of funded treatment length

Amendments have been made to the Special Authority criteria for varenicline tartrate (Champix) tablets to make it clear that a maximum of 3 months' varenicline will be subsidised on each Special Authority approval. This was the original intent of the 3-month Special Authority approval period but it was not previously explicitly stated on the application form.

We recommend that patients are prescribed one starter pack and the remainder of the 12-week treatment course on the same prescription to avoid potential confusion. In other words, the prescription should include one starter pack (two weeks' treatment) plus 10-weeks of continuance treatment. If separate prescriptions are written for the starter pack and continuance treatment, only 10 weeks of the continuance treatment will be subsidised.

We also recommend that patients are made aware they will get only one subsidised 12-week treatment course in a year.

Special Foods - Substitution Clarification and Stock Report

Ensure powder vanilla, both 400 g and 900 g tins have arrived and we have confirmation there is sufficient stock at wholesalers. Ensure powder chocolate 900 g is due to arrive on July 17 2011 and back orders will be filled shortly after this date.

Sustagen Hospital Formula vanilla and chocolate both remain in stock and we do not anticipate any stock issues.

Item of Interest

Docetaxel – Removal of Special Authority

From 1 July 2011 the Special Authority criteria applying to the funding of docetaxel will be removed. Docetaxel will remain listed as "PCT only – Specialist" pharmaceutical meaning it is only subsidised when claimed for by DHB Hospitals as a treatment for cancer.



PHARMAC Seminar Series – Upcoming Seminars

The PHARMAC Seminar Series provides high quality educational seminars for a range of health professionals. The seminars are held in Wellington and the cost to attend is \$100 + GST. PHARMAC covers the cost of travel, including flights, to and from the seminar and provides catering on the day.

For further information on the seminars below, and to register for a place, head to our website: www.seminarseries.pharmac.govt.nz



Dates (2011)	Topic	Description
29 July	Update on Prescribing and Using Standing Orders in Schools	Focuses on standing orders for school based health services through links with primary health care and why they can make a difference. Updates on youth health issues, relevant pharmacology, understanding the legislation that supports safe practice, presentations from GPs and school nurses who currently use standing orders, and workshop on developing standing orders.
5 August	Rest Home Prescribing	Covers some of those areas that are chronically undertreated in the elderly and some of those areas in which treatment is often confused. There will be a focus on how to manage some of those acute management issues in the rest home environment; and we'll spend some time looking at the end of life/palliative care perspective of residential care.
22 August	Common Paediatric Conditions (repeat)	Focuses on common conditions in childhood that present to the general practice. Areas covered will include chronic cough, constipation, dental problems, the six-week check, changes to the immunisation schedule, head shapes and fontanelles, rashes and behavioural and learning issues.



inPharmation

PHARMAC publishes a quarterly email newsletter, inPharmation, that includes news and updates on developments around PHARMAC and pharmaceutical issues. If you would like to receive inPharmation, contact simon.english@pharmac.govt.nz.

ISSN 2230-4703 (Print)

ISSN 2230-4711 (Online)

Special Authority Queries: **0800 243 666**

General Questions: **0800 66 00 50** (9am – 5pm Monday to Friday)

Online version of Prescriber newsletter:

<http://www.pharmac.govt.nz/healthpros/CliniciansNews>

Inpharmation newsletter:

<http://www.pharmac.govt.nz/patients/ourviews/inpharmation>.

Newsletter feedback: email susan.haniel@pharmac.govt.nz

Please note this is not a complete reference to all changes occurring from 1 July 2011, for the full reference; please consult your Update to the Pharmaceutical Schedule.

New Zealand Government

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