

MONTHLY REPORT FOR MARCH 2020

COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

Date 1 April 2020

Attention Hon Dr David Clark
Minister of Health

Copies to:

PHARMAC Board
Lead DHB CE, Pharmaceuticals
Director-General of Health – Ministry of Health
Manager Governance and Crown Entities – Ministry of Health
Senior Advisor, Governance and Crown Entities – Ministry of Health

Contact(s)

Sarah Fitt, Chief Executive
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Key Items

COVID-19 Response and medicines management

Medicines and Device supply management

PHARMAC has put in place Pharmaceutical Schedule rule changes that will restrict the dispensing of funded community medicines to just one month's supply at a time.

From Friday 27 March 2020 community pharmacists are required to limit dispensing of all funded medicines to one month's supply (or three months for oral contraceptives). This was in response to stockpiling of medicines.

PHARMAC continues to maintain regular contact with all contracted medicine and device suppliers, requesting status updates on any current or predicted impact to their supply chains. Most suppliers have indicated they have contingency plans which will maintain continuity of supply. Approximately 50 suppliers indicated they will potentially have an issue with supply in the coming weeks or months.

Changes to Schedule criteria and rules

We have also amended some Special Authority criteria to make it easier for people to have continuing access to funded treatments while New Zealand is responding to COVID 19. We issued a media release about this on 31 March 2020.

The Retail Pharmacy – Specialist Restriction, which requires a specialist to provide a (new) recommendation within two years, for certain pharmaceuticals to be subsidised, will also be removed from 1 April 2020.

PHARMAC has heard from clinicians that getting specialist recommendations and some laboratory tests will be very difficult while responding to COVID-19. Removing these barriers will help people to continue to get the funded medicines they need, such as some cancer treatments and cardiovascular treatments.

The Pharmaceutical Schedule will be updated to reflect these changes. PHARMAC intends to change the criteria back to the original requirements once health services have stabilised to a point where it becomes practical to reinstate them.

We are continuing to monitor the situation and may make further adjustments to the Pharmaceutical Schedule Rules as required.

Influenza vaccine supply

We expect that interest in COVID-19 could drive increased demand for the seasonal influenza vaccine. Additional influenza vaccine uptake would also have the benefit of potentially decreasing demand on primary and secondary care during any COVID-19 response.

PHARMAC staff have secured supply for:

- 1.448 million doses of Afluria Quad;
- 20,000 doses of Afluria Quad Junior;
- an additional 300,000 doses of vaccine from Mylan (the only other supplier that has been able to allocate product to New Zealand for 2020).

In total, this will allow for **1.768 million doses to be available in the 2020 season**, a 30% (400,000 doses) increase on 2019 distribution.

PHARMAC staff continue to pursue all possible options for additional influenza vaccine stock; at the time of writing suppliers have indicated that no additional vaccine stock is available for New Zealand. Vaccines for use in New Zealand are manufactured specifically for the Southern Hemisphere market to protect against the dominant influenza strains expected to circulate here.

Influenza vaccine stock movements

- 772,850 vaccine doses have been distributed up to 30 March 2020. Further distribution of the 121,150 doses remaining in stock is being carefully managed to prioritise those most at risk.
- 20,000 doses of Afluria Quad Junior have arrived in New Zealand, distribution is to begin 6 April.
- Further stock is expected to arrive in New Zealand soon: 6 April (300,000 doses), late April (230,000 doses), May (remainder).
- Manufacturing locations: Melbourne (1.468 million doses) Netherlands (300,000 doses).
- Logistics: priority air freight capacity is being secured to ensure no delays.

We are keeping the Ministry of Health updated on vaccine availability to support their planning for the 2020 influenza vaccination programme.

Balance of Report is Out of Scope or redacted under section 9(2)(g)