

Minutes of the PHARMAC Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting

Friday 6 November 2020

The meeting was held on Level 9, 40 Mercer St, Wellington from 11.00 am following a mihi whakatau to welcome new members.

Present:

Lisa Lawrence Chair
Adrienne von Tunzelmann Deputy Chair
Hazel Heal
Robyn Manuel (via Zoom)
Leslie Robinson
Mary Schnackenberg
Tui Taurua
Sione Vaka
Vivien Verheijen

From session 6.

David Lui
Key Frost
Tuiloma Lina Samu

Apologies:

Janfrie Wakim

In attendance:

Alison Hill (Director of Engagement and Implementation), Janet Mackay (Manager, Implementation), Merryn Simmons (Implementation Lead)

For relevant items: Sean Dougherty (Manager, Schedule Strategy and Development), Belinda Ray Johnson (Schedule Development Manager), Elena Saunders (Therapeutic Group Manager), Sarah Fitt (Chief Executive), Rebecca Elliott (Senior Policy Analyst)

1. Welcome and whanaungatanga

The Chair opened the meeting with a karakia and welcomed everyone. Attendees introduced themselves.

2. Changes to PHARMAC's approach to competitive procurement

Sean Dougherty presented an overview of changes PHARMAC plans to make to its competitive procurement processes over the coming years. As part of these changes several matters will be brought to the Committee for advice and discussion.

The work is expected to deliver three major improvements:

- ensuring that PHARMAC has a range of different procurement methods available for different situations, and that the procurement method used (and therefore what the impact can be for patients) is reflective of the characteristics of the product and of the population who use it, including how challenging a brand change may be for individuals;
- adapting our procurement practices to better address the challenges associated with older products, which have typically been through multiple rounds of competition; and,
- more strongly valuing positive and negative externalities associated with our procurement choices, specifically sector efficiencies and environmental impacts, e.g. packaging going into landfill.

The committee was provided with an update on Principal Supply Status (PSS). PHARMAC is currently updating medicine supply agreements/contracts to reflect PSS, starting with the annual tender. PHARMAC intends to seek advice from the CAC on how PSS could be implemented, before PSS changes come into effect from July 2021 at the earliest.

The quality of medicines in the New Zealand market is assured by Medsafe and this is largely prior to any consideration by PHARMAC. PHARMAC is however responsible for implementing brand changes and ensuring they are as smooth as possible.

Members acknowledged it can be easier for patients to start on a new brand of medicine than to change brands. For some people there is a fear of changing to a new medicine. PHARMAC staff acknowledged this needed to be considered.

Members were interested to hear how brand changes impact on medicines adherence and discussed the placebo and nocebo effect. Members indicated their interest in receiving further information on the effects of placebo and nocebo on medicine efficacy.

Members were interested in understanding more about the approval and funding processes for rongoā Māori and complementary medicines.

3. Dispensing frequency of community pharmaceuticals

Belinda Ray Johnson presented an overview of the changes PHARMAC is proposing to make to dispensing frequency rules in the Pharmaceutical Schedule. These rules relate to how much medicine gets dispensed to patients at the pharmacy at one time.

Currently, most prescriptions are written without the prescriber specifying dispensing frequency, leaving the pharmacist to decide how frequently the medicine will be dispensed, within the boundaries of the Schedule rules. The proposed rules would allow, in most cases, consumers and pharmacists to agree to dispensing arrangements that best meet the needs of the consumer.

Ideas were sought from the CAC on how best to gain consumer input into a consultation process about dispensing frequency. There would also be wider consultation with pharmacists and prescribers.

4. Diabetes RFP

Janet Mackay and Elena Saunders presented a paper outlining the status of the type 2 diabetes treatment RFP and provided further context on some options for next steps that are being explored. Committee members noted the importance of PHARMAC considering all feedback received to consultation and acknowledged that PHARMAC's decisions can have significant impacts on the health sector.

5. Session with the Chief Executive

Sarah Fitt joined the meeting and gave an overview of some key focuses for PHARMAC. She noted that, as reflected in PHARMAC's new strategic direction and refreshed Te Whaioranga strategy, Te Tiriti o Waitangi has been lifted to sit alongside PHARMAC's legislative purpose. There is a focus across the organisation on continuous improvement and on ensuring that the public has a greater understanding of PHARMAC's decisions.

She noted the recent announcement of Andrew Little as the new Minister of Health. PHARMAC staff are currently completing a Briefing for the Incoming Minister (BIM) which provides an overview of PHARMAC's work and priorities. PHARMAC Board Chair, Steve Maharey and Sarah Fitt will be meeting with Minister Little shortly.

Sarah noted the recent announcement that the decision on funding of type 2 diabetes treatments would be delayed. The delay was disappointing, but it was very important to give careful consideration to the feedback received in consultation, and this is always an important step in PHARMAC's funding decisions.

PHARMAC has recently appointed Trevor Simpson, to a new role of Chief Advisor Māori, which is part of PHARMAC's senior leadership team.

6. Expert advice policy

Rebecca Elliott presented an overview of PHARMAC's work on a draft policy related to expert advice. This proposed a broad definition of expert advice as advice that is proactively sought with the intent to inform PHARMAC's work and ultimately help PHARMAC make high quality decisions.

The work has emerged through planned reviews of the CAC and proposed changes to the Terms of Reference for the Pharmacology and Therapeutics Advisory Committee (PTAC). These have exposed the need for a policy that clarifies why and when PHARMAC seeks expert input, and how it is incorporated in PHARMAC's work. PHARMAC's focus to date has been primarily on expert clinical advice, but it recognises that this may not capture the scope of advice required.

Consultation is planned to commence before the end of the year on proposed changes to the CAC and PTAC Terms of References and underlying expert advice policy. Feedback will be sought from a broad range of stakeholders.

The proposed changes seek to enhance consumer perspectives, promote diversity and equity and embed the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Members noted the importance of understanding and considering patients' lived experiences, cultural factors, social inequities and values. They identified the need for clear communications with consumers and for them to have a safe space to raise queries and obtain information in a culturally appropriate way.

Members said they would like to see more focus on Te Tiriti o Waitangi rather than the Treaty of Waitangi in the draft documents.

Members were involved in workshop sessions on the draft CAC Terms of Reference, the role of consumers in PHARMAC's expert advice framework and how PHARMAC should approach consultation.

7. Poroporoaki

PHARMAC staff gathered to acknowledge, thank and farewell CAC members David Lui, Tuiloma Lina Samu and Key Frost. All have been members of the committee since 2014 and were thanked for their contributions to, and time on, the Consumer Advisory Committee.

The meeting closed at 4.15pm.