

12 July 2013

Decisions involving diazepam, gabapentin, and naltrexone

PHARMAC is pleased to announce the approval of proposals relating to diazepam, gabapentin and naltrexone, which were the subject of a consultation letter dated 14 June 2013. The decisions are summarised as follows:

- the subsidy and delisting protection for diazepam 2 mg and 5 mg tablets (Arrow-Diazepam) will be extended to 30 June 2017;
- Arrow-Gabapentin (gabapentin 100 mg, 300 mg and 400 mg capsules) will be listed in the Pharmaceutical Schedule from 1 December 2013 subject to the same restrictions that apply to the Nupentin brand of gabapentin;
- the subsidy for the Nupentin brand of gabapentin 300 mg and 400 mg capsules in Section B of the Pharmaceutical Schedule will be reduced to the level of the Arrow-Gabapentin subsidies via the application of reference pricing from 1 March 2014. Patients with a Special Authority for gabapentin for epilepsy prior to 1 March 2014 will be able to continue to access full subsidy for Nupentin via endorsement;
- access to naltrexone 50 mg tablets (Naltraccord) will be widened in Section B of the Pharmaceutical Schedule from 1 August 2013 via extension of the Special Authority approval periods from 3 to 6 months, in conjunction with a price decrease.

The consultation letter also included a proposal to remove the Special Authority and hospital restrictions from the Arrow-Venlafaxine XR brand of venlafaxine from 1 August 2013. A decision on this proposal has been delayed while PHARMAC considers issues raised during consultation on the proposal, so it will not be implemented from 1 August 2013 as proposed. PHARMAC expects to make a decision on this proposal in early August, potentially with a 1 September 2013 implementation date if the proposal is approved.

Details of the decisions

Diazepam

- There will be no change to the listing of diazepam 2 mg and 5 mg tablets (Arrow-Diazepam) in the Pharmaceutical Schedule. Subsidy and delisting protection for Arrow-Diazepam will be extended from 30 June 2014 (the previous protection date) to 30 June 2017.

Gabapentin

- Arrow-Gabapentin will be listed in Section B, and in Part II of Section H, of the Pharmaceutical Schedule from 1 December 2013 at the following prices and subsidies (ex-manufacturer, excluding GST):

Chemical	Presentation	Brand	Pack size	Price and subsidy
Gabapentin	Cap100 mg	Arrow-Gabapentin	100	\$7.16
Gabapentin	Cap 300 mg	Arrow-Gabapentin	100	\$11.00
Gabapentin	Cap 400 mg	Arrow-Gabapentin	100	\$13.75

- Arrow-Gabapentin will be listed in the Pharmaceutical Schedule subject to the same restrictions that apply to the Nupentin brand of gabapentin (Special Authority in Section B, prescribing restrictions in Part II of Section H).
- From 1 March 2014 the subsidies for the Nupentin brand of gabapentin will be reduced in Section B of the Pharmaceutical Schedule to the level of the subsidies for the Arrow-Gabapentin brand through the application of reference pricing as follows (ex-manufacturer, excluding GST):

Chemical	Presentation	Brand	Pack size	Current price and subsidy	Subsidy (and price, where different*)
Gabapentin	Cap 100 mg	Nupentin	100	\$7.16	\$7.16
Gabapentin	Cap 300 mg	Nupentin	100	\$11.50	\$11.00 (\$11.50)
Gabapentin	Cap 400 mg	Nupentin	100	\$14.75	\$13.75 (\$14.75)

*If the supplier of Nupentin does not reduce its price to match the new subsidy, it would result in a manufacturer's surcharge applying to Nupentin cap 300 mg and 400 mg.

- From 1 March 2014, any patient who had a Special Authority approval for gabapentin for epilepsy prior to 1 March 2014 will be able to access the higher subsidy of \$11.50 and \$14.75 per pack of Nupentin 300 mg and 500 mg capsules, respectively, by endorsement.

Naltrexone

- The price and subsidy for Naltraccord will be reduced in Section B and in Part II of Section H of the Pharmaceutical Schedule from 1 August 2013 as follows (ex-manufacturer, excluding GST):

Chemical	Presentation	Brand	Pack size	Current price and subsidy	New price and subsidy
Naltrexone	Tab 50 mg	Naltraccord	30	\$79.00	\$76.00

- Access to Naltraccord will be widened in Section B of the Pharmaceutical Schedule from 1 August 2013 via amendment of the Special Authority criteria as follows (deletions in ~~strike through~~, additions in **bold**):

Initial application from any medical practitioner. Approvals valid for ~~3~~ **6** months for applications meeting the following criteria:

Both:

- 1 Patient is currently enrolled in a recognised comprehensive treatment programme for alcohol dependence; and
- 2 Applicant works in or with a community Alcohol and Drug Service contracted to one of the District Health Boards or accredited against the New Zealand Alcohol and Other Drug Sector Standard or the National Mental Health Sector Standard.

Renewal from any medical practitioner. Approvals valid for ~~3~~ 6 months for applications meeting the following criteria:

Both:

- 1 Compliance with the medication (prescriber determined); and
- 2 Any of the following:
 - 2.1 Patient is still unstable and requires further treatment; or
 - 2.2 Patient achieved significant improvement but requires further treatment; or
 - 2.3 Patient is well controlled but requires maintenance therapy.

~~The patient must not have had more than 1 prior approval in the last 12 months.~~

- Naltracord will retain its Sole Subsidised Supply Status and Hospital Supply Status until 30 June 2016.

Feedback received

We appreciate all of the feedback that we received and acknowledge the time people took to respond. All consultation responses received were considered in their entirety in making a decision on the proposed changes. The most commonly raised issue in the consultation responses was the potential risk of switching brands of anti-epilepsy agents in patients with epilepsy. After considering this feedback the decision was made that patients with Special Authority approvals for gabapentin for epilepsy prior to reference pricing will be able to access full subsidy for Nupentin following application of reference pricing to the Nupentin brand.

More information

If you have any questions about this decision, you can call our toll free number (9 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday) on 0800 66 00 50.