

14 March 2008

Review of the Appointment Protocol for the Pharmacology and Therapeutics Advisory Committee

Introduction

In December 2007 the Honourable Peter Dunne released *Medicines New Zealand* and its accompanying action plan, *Actioning Medicines New Zealand*. The development of *Medicines New Zealand* included an extensive consultation process. During the consultation process some submitters raised concerns about the ability of the Pharmacology and Therapeutics Advisory Committee (PTAC) to provide free and frank, objective advice to PHARMAC. Responding to these concerns *Actioning Medicines New Zealand* includes a commitment by the Ministry of Health together with PHARMAC to review the protocol for appointments to PTAC. The purpose of this review, as stated in *Actioning Medicines New Zealand* is “to ensure [the protocol] supports the independent appointment process required by the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000”.

This document provides you with background information about:

- the scope of the review
- the legislative framework for establishing and making appointments to PTAC
- the role and functions of PTAC.

Scope

This review specifically considers the protocol governing the appointment and re-appointment of members to PTAC. A copy of the current protocol is attached for your information.

Actioning Medicines New Zealand also includes a commitment to consult on PTAC’s Operational Guidelines “to ensure optimal arrangements are in place for PTAC to provide free and frank advice to the PHARMAC Board”. Guidelines include the PTAC member person specification. Consultation on the Guidelines is planned for later this year and is outside of the scope of the current review.

Review objectives:

To ensure that:

- the appointment protocol supports the independent appointment and re-appointment process required by the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000
- the appointment protocol supports PTAC members to provide free and frank, objective advice to PHARMAC
- PHARMAC has access to high quality, clinical expertise to support the Board in making medicines funding decisions.

Legislative framework

Establishing PTAC

The New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000 requires that the board of PHARMAC establish “a pharmacology and therapeutics advisory committee to provide objective advice to PHARMAC on pharmaceuticals and their benefits.”¹

Power to appoint

The power to appoint members to PTAC lies with the Director-General of Health. Part 4, section 50(4) of the Act provides for this, stating, “the members of the pharmacology and therapeutics advisory committee are appointed by the Director-General of Health”.² However, recognising the importance of the expert advice that PTAC provides to PHARMAC, the Act stipulates that this be done “in consultation with the board of PHARMAC”.³

Purpose and functions of PTAC

PTAC is a statutory committee made up of vocationally registered medical practitioners with expertise in clinical pharmacology, internal medicines and general practice. The primary purpose of PTAC is to provide PHARMAC with objective advice on pharmaceuticals and their benefits.

The Guidelines specify that PTAC’s role is to:

- consider and make recommendations to PHARMAC on applications for the listing, de-listing, restricting and de-restricting of pharmaceuticals on the Pharmaceutical Schedule which have been referred to it by PHARMAC
- when requested by PHARMAC, consider and make recommendations to PHARMAC on proposals for defining, removing or amending a therapeutic group or sub-group of pharmaceuticals on the Pharmaceutical Schedule
- review, monitor and from time-to-time make recommendations to PHARMAC in relation to the management of the Pharmaceutical Schedule
- subject to agreement of PHARMAC, initiate its own reviews of any policy adopted by PHARMAC in relation to the management of the Pharmaceutical Schedule and provide reports or make commendations to PHARMAC arising from those reviews
- make recommendations to PHARMAC on the information that should be provided in support of applications for the listing of pharmaceuticals on the Pharmaceutical Schedule
- consider and report, or make recommendations to PHARMAC on any other matters that may be referred to it by PHARMAC
- give objective expert advice on pharmaceuticals and their benefits.

¹ The New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000, Part 4, s50(1)(a).

² Ibid, s50(4)

³ Ibid.

Consultation

The focus of this review is the process for appointing members to PTAC. We are seeking your views on:

- any specific issues, concerns or gaps you see in the current process
- what you see as the key elements of a good selection and re-appointment process, within the context of the existing legislative framework
- any other points you wish to share relating to the appointment protocol and process.

Meetings with interested stakeholders are planned for the 24 March 2008 to 28 April 2008. The consultation will also be advertised in the media and on the Ministry of Health and PHARMAC websites.