

Media release (30 July 2015)

TPPA implications for PHARMAC raise serious concerns for people with MS

The Multiple Sclerosis Society of New Zealand (MSNZ) is extremely concerned by the potential implications of the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement for people with multiple sclerosis.

“The TPPA could undermine PHARMAC’s buying power and its right to choose the most appropriate and cost-effective drugs. It could also impede its ability to negotiate confidentially to gain the best price. This could have devastating consequences for people with MS and their families,” said Multiple Sclerosis New Zealand President Malcolm Rickerby.

“Many people with MS are from low income households or are beneficiaries, due to an inability to work caused by their MS symptoms. Many of their partners and family members are also on a low wage or are carers. This makes them extremely vulnerable to any increases in prescription charges, which we see as a very likely consequence of the TPPA’s impact on PHARMAC.”

Mr Rickerby said that if New Zealand agrees to a situation where pharmaceutical patents are extended from five to eight years, as speculated by some commentators, this will have a serious knock-on effect and constrain PHARMAC from funding new drugs in the future.

“New Zealanders will pay higher costs for patented drugs for longer unless the Government increases PHARMAC’s budget to offset that change to patents. What we are seeking is a firm commitment from the Government that the extended patent protection resulting from participation in the TPPA will not limit or constrain access to the next generation of MS drugs.

PHARMAC funding for the latest generation MS drugs is already seven years behind Australia due to Government funding constraints, said Mr Rickerby. “Only the latest MS drugs are shown to have clinical efficacy. In the case of MS treatment, there is no scope for substituting generics.”

Since PHARMAC negotiated the best price for bringing two important new MS treatments to New Zealand last year there has been a strong demand for the new treatments, he said.

“The number of people applying for those treatments has already exceeded the number PHARMAC expected to be approved for treatment for the whole of 2015.”

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About MSNZ:

There are approximately 4,000 people with multiple sclerosis in New Zealand. For more information about MSNZ please email info@msnz.org.nz or call 0800 MS LINE (67 54 63)