



THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP
Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

1 August 2009

New Listings and Changes to PBS from 1 August 2009

Several new listings and changes to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) from 1 August will bring health benefits to many Australians. Full details of the new listings and changes are available at www.pbs.gov.au.

The health care needs of refugee and humanitarian entrants to Australia will see the listing of **Praziquantel** for the treatment of schistosoma infections due to various types of blood fluke.

Schistosomes are rare in Australia but can affect refugees and Australians coming from infected areas. The infections are caused by a major human parasite, threatening 650 million people worldwide and causing severe morbidity, especially in children under the age of 14. The estimated cost to the PBS is \$59,000 per year.

Arsenic trioxide will be listed for the treatment of relapsed acute promyelocytic leukaemia (APL), a form of acute myeloid leukaemia (AML) that accounts for about 10% of acute AML diagnoses. This listing provides a PBS-subsidised treatment for patients who have either failed to respond to or have relapsed after treatment with standard first-line therapy.

Bimatoprost with timolol maleate eye drops will be listed to treat elevated intra-ocular pressure in patients with open-angle glaucoma or ocular hypertension. This fixed combination product provides an alternative to administering two individual therapies of the same components. Using a single, combined product avoids the problem of 'wash out' where the first administered drug is 'washed out' of the eye by the second.

Hypromellose oral gel will be available to palliative care patients where dry mouth is a symptom. This product provides a longer duration of relief than the currently listed carmellose sodium mouth spray.

Oxybutynin transdermal patches will be listed on the PBS for treatment of urge urinary incontinence or urgency due to uncontrolled contraction of the bladder wall in a patient who cannot tolerate or swallow oral oxybutynin. The patches provide a treatment option for patients with these conditions who are unable to tolerate the oral dose form.

Rivaroxaban will provide an oral alternative to the currently available injectable anti-thrombotic drugs used to prevent venous thromboembolism (VTE) in patients who have undergone total hip or knee replacement.

About 51,000 patients will be treated in the first year of listing, increasing to 66,000 over the following five years. The estimated additional cost to the PBS is \$6.75 million in year 1 increasing to \$8.5 million in year 5.

An additional formulation **Voriconazole** powder in oral suspension which can be used by children and people having difficulty swallowing is to be listed for the treatment of serious fungal infections in immunocompromised patients.

For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister's Office on 02 6277 7220.