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MEDIA RELEASE

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Government Subsidises New Drugs

The Australian Government will subsidise new forms of several drugs already listed on the PBS and will extend the listing of Adalimumab as an alternative treatment for severe psoriasis from today.

Adalimumab will be available for the treatment of severe chronic plaque psoriasis as an alternative treatment to other listed treatments (etanercept and infliximab). Chronic plaque psoriasis is the most common type of psoriasis, which is a non-contagious autoimmune disease affecting the skin and joints. It often appears on the elbows, knees, scalp and buttocks.

Because adalimumab is listed on a cost minimisation basis with etanercept, there will be no additional costs for the PBS.

Etanercept will be made available for continuous treatment in patients meeting the criteria for severe chronic plaque psoriasis. The current PBS listing allows for 12 weeks of etanercept followed by a treatment-free period of at least 12 weeks. Following today's change to the listing, prescribers will be able to treat selected patients for 24 weeks with etanercept with no treatment-free period.

The change in restriction will not increase the number of patients treated for this condition. However, there will be additional costs to the PBS due to more etanercept being used by selected patients, which is estimated at \$11.9 million over the first four years.

A new formulation of pantoprazole has also been listed for the initial treatment of peptic ulcer. Peptic ulcer is an ulcer of an area of the gastrointestinal tract is usually acidic and thus extremely painful.

The new granule formulation is an alternative method to the currently listed 40 mg tablet under the same listing conditions at the same price. It may be suitable for use in patients unable to swallow tablets or for patients who are tube fed. This item is available as a restricted benefit listing for the treatment of patients with gastro oesophageal reflux, scleroderma of the oesophagus and Zollinger-Ellison syndrome. There is no additional net cost to the PBS as this formulation is listed at the same price as the tablet.

Efalizumab, which had been listed on the PBS since 2006 for the treatment of severe chronic plaque psoriasis, has been delisted at the request of its sponsors.

Information about medicines subsidised by the Australian Government through the PBS is available at www.pbs.gov.au

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