60-day prescriptions – Case Study – Jeanette

After years of joint pain, Jeanette, 50, from Melbourne, was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis in 2019.

“I’m seronegative for rheumatoid arthritis, which doesn’t show up in blood tests, making it hard to diagnose,” Jeanette said.

“I used to be very active – yoga, bushwalking – but I gradually started doing less and less because of joint pain,” Jeanette said.

Jeanette now takes sulfasalazine, upadacitinib, and hydroxychloroquine which have helped her get back to normality.

“These medicines mean I don’t have daily pain. Previously, I would wake up and hobble and be very stiff. I would have to move for 30 to 40 minutes for my body to work properly.

“I was also so fatigued that there were times when I was taking a week off work, because I didn’t have any energy.

“Now I get up and feel normal, and I have fewer flare ups of pain, stiffness and exhaustion. I can live a normal life.”

Jeanette estimates she spends $1,100 per year on her medicines. She also goes to the doctor every three months for a check up and to renew her prescriptions, costing her more than $180 per visit.

Since 1 September 2023, one of Jeanette’s medicines – sulfasalazine – is eligible for 60-day prescriptions.

With her doctor’s approval, Jeanette is able to get two months’ worth on a single prescription – halving the medicine’s cost and potentially reducing the number of doctor visits she needs.

“Everything that can be done to minimise the requirements from the patient is a really helpful thing,” Jeanette said.

“The less time I can spend dealing with my condition, the better. It means I can enjoy my social and work life without having to constantly think about my joints.

“It seems like a small thing, but when you’re managing a chronic condition, or when you’re feeling unwell, it all has a big impact on your quality of life.”