Drug Utilisation Sub-Committee
Outcome Statement 4 - 5 February 2021

The Drug Utilisation Sub-Committee (DUSC) of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) held its 101st meeting on the 4 – 5 February 2021.

DUSC has a national focus of excellence in collecting, analysing and interpreting data on the utilisation of medicines in Australia for use by the PBAC. Review of the utilisation of medicines is an essential management tool in facilitating the objectives of the National Medicines Policy.

The PBAC is also committed to understanding consumer perspectives and integrating them into consideration of medicines and vaccines. Consumers are able to provide their views about medicine utilisation reviews to the PBAC via a web interface.

Submissions to the PBAC

DUSC noted that 35 major submissions had been received for the March 2021 meeting of PBAC. DUSC provided detailed advice to the PBAC on projected usage and financial cost for the major submissions where there was high cost, uncertain utilisation, first medicine in class or quality use of medicines concerns. The agenda for the March 2021 PBAC meeting can be found on the PBS website.

Utilisation of PBS Listed Medicines

DUSC regularly examines utilisation of Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) items when there is at least 24 months of prescription data available and where DUSC or the PBAC has highlighted items of interest. When an analysis of utilisation is to be undertaken sponsors are notified, provided with a copy of the report and an opportunity to comment prior to the DUSC meeting. Reviews to be considered by the PBAC are also published in the PBAC meeting agenda. All reports, Sponsor comments and DUSC assessment of the reports are subsequently provided to the PBAC.

DUSC reviewed the utilisation of the following PBS medicines in February 2021:

Nusinersen for spinal muscular atrophy (SMA)

DUSC reviewed the use of nusinersen for the treatment of Type I, II, IIIa SMA. In 2018, 140 patients were dispensed 591 nusinersen scripts. In 2019, 160 patients were dispensed 514 nusinersen scripts. Type II SMA was the most common type of SMA in patients receiving nusinersen treatment. The data was too immature to analyse the time on nusinersen treatment, the median treatment duration was not reached by the analysis end date. DUSC advised that a further analysis of the time on nusinersen treatment should be undertaken when sufficient data was available.

DUSC requested that the report be provided to the PBAC.

Ocular lubricants for severe dry eye syndrome

DUSC reviewed the use of ocular lubricants for the treatment of severe dry eye syndrome. DUSC noted that there are currently a large number of ocular lubricant products listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) and that there has been substantial growth in the use of preservative-free (PF) lubricants. DUSC noted that the rising costs in the market were driven mainly by increased uptake of ocular lubricants that contain hyaluronate sodium, which are

generally more costly. DUSC noted that most patients who were initiated on PF ocular lubricants did not follow the PBS authority listing requirement that a patient must be sensitive to preservatives in multi-dose eye drops to be eligible for PF eye drops.

DUSC requested that the report be provided to the PBAC.

Upcoming Utilisation Analysis of PBS Listed Medicines

Utilisation of the following medicines has been selected for consideration at future DUSC meetings.

Predicted versus Actual Utilisation Analysis

- Guanfacine for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Evolocumab for familial heterozygous hypercholesterolaemia

Analysis of single or multiple medicines in a treatment area

- Somatropin for growth hormone therapy

An outcome statement will be available following each meeting of DUSC. For further information, please contact the DUSC Secretariat at DUSC@health.gov.au.

A/Professor Christopher Etherton-Beer
Chair
Drug Utilisation Sub-Committee