

Update from the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee

August 2024

I had the responsibility of Chairing the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) meeting held on 10-12 July. It was a busy meeting with a full agenda, and we also welcomed new members of the PBAC to their first meeting: GP Prof Michael Kidd, oncologist A/Prof Kate Mahon, health economist Prof Richard Norman, GP A/Prof Ines Rio, psychiatrist A/Prof Melanie Turner, as well as welcoming back cardiologist, Dr Ray Parkin, who has been reappointed for another term.

As Prof Ward outlined in June's communication, this update is in addition to the formal PBAC minutes and is intended to give a wider picture of the Committee and its discussions.

Consumer and clinician input and involvement

The Committee wished to acknowledge the contribution made by consumers, clinicians and their organisations in informing its work. Across 26 agenda items, over 800 submissions were received, including 144 from individual patients and over 30 from patient organisations. This reflects a high degree of engagement and commitment from all those involved in providing these inputs and working with the PBAC to support positive outcomes for patients.

The July PBAC agenda included several first-time submissions for new medicines and therapies. The contributions received for these items were especially important because they gave Committee members valuable insights into patient experiences and perspectives on these products.

Relevant meetings to gain additional consumer and clinical input from groups before the July PBAC meeting included discussions with:

- Patient representatives and clinical experts on Myasthenia gravis
- Psoriasis Australia
- Patient representatives and Rare Voices Australia on Progressive Familial Intrahepatic Cholestasis.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

The Committee considered two items regarding RSV immunisation and the Committee thanked Prof Nigel Crawford, Chair of the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI), for his attendance.

Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) prescribing by nurse practitioners and midwives

As part of an ongoing review of PBS prescribing by nurse practitioners and endorsed midwives, Committee members had an in-depth discussion of the subset of PBS listings for nurse practitioner prescribing that are subject to a Shared Care Model administrative note in the Schedule.

This work is in the context of the legislative changes occurring on 1 November 2024, whereby there will no longer be a requirement for nurse practitioners and endorsed midwives to have specified collaborative arrangements with medical practitioners. The PBAC recognises that current professional practice standards, settings of care and an individual's scope of practice will largely determine the degree of collaboration amongst health practitioners. Extensive stakeholder consultation has been occurring to inform the PBAC's considerations and the Committee looks forward to continuing these important discussions as it considers further tranches of the review at future meetings.

Applications to delist a medicine from the PBS

The PBAC functions include taking into consideration any submissions from pharmaceutical companies requesting to delist a medicine from the PBS. The PBAC provides advice about the clinical need for these items, including the potential impact on patients and clinicians.

While the Committee notes that, ultimately, decisions about continuing to supply a medicine on the PBS are a commercial decision for the responsible pharmaceutical company, we believe that these requests should be managed with consideration of the stakeholders most directly affected. The PBAC understands how challenging these processes can be for clinicians and patients and will always seek to mitigate impacts where possible.

Next PBAC meeting

The next 3-day PBAC meeting is scheduled for 6-8 November 2024, and it will be a full meeting over that sitting. The public agenda is now available, and the opportunity for providing comments and input is open. The closing date for consumer comments is 25 September 2024.

Jo Watson

Deputy Chair, Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee