

21 June 2024

PHARMAC
PO Box 10254
The Terrace
Wellington 6143

Sent via email to: consult@pharmac.govt.nz and enquiries@pharmac.govt.nz

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Updated proposal to implement a Pharmac Pharmaceutical Schedule funding change to spacer devices allowing them to be funded via prescription or by direct provision by a pharmacist with a zero-dollar co-payment

Thank you for the opportunity to propose a schedule funding change affecting spacer devices.

The Pharmacy Guild of New Zealand (Inc.) (the Guild) is a national membership organisation representing community pharmacy owners. We provide leadership on all issues affecting the sector and advocate for the business and professional interests of community pharmacy.

We are updating our proposal of April 2023 to align with information gathered from the Asthma and Respiratory Foundation of New Zealand and proposing a change in the Pharmac Pharmaceutical Schedule for all the spacer devices currently listed from “Funded on PSO only” to “Funded on PSO (for bulk supply to health practitioners) and funded (with restrictions) on a prescription, including direct provision by a pharmacist.” This can be compared to the direct provision of nicotine replacement therapy by a pharmacist under the provisions in Part I of Section A of the Pharmac Pharmaceutical Schedule.

We further propose that there be no prescription co-payments to patients when obtaining the spacer device on prescription from a prescriber or via direct provision by a pharmacist in line with best practice equity and access requirements.

Supporting our proposal, we would like you to consider the following:

- We believe, via feedback from our members, that providing spacer devices fully funded on a prescription from a prescriber or direct provision by a pharmacist will increase equitable access to spacer devices, and help improve patient compliance and adherence, medicine delivery and therapeutic outcomes, and minimise adverse effects.
- Many prescribers are not aware that spacer devices are currently only funded via the PSO mechanism or choose not to write a PSO for a single item so it can be supplied to a patient. Patients often present to pharmacies to replace old or lost/broken spacer devices, and then need to be referred to a prescriber to be able to access something which a pharmacist could simply have provided. This adds to workforce pressures and diminishes capacity at the general practice.

- Restrictions of a maximum of two spacers per prescription from a prescriber or by direct provision from a pharmacist should prevent wastage but allow for a “home and school/office” approach, with adherence in mind.
- As pharmacists are easily accessible to both patients and healthcare providers, they are ideally positioned to play an important role in providing patients with practical recommendations on inhaler use, education on, and continuous assessment of, optimal inhaler technique and provision of devices, such as spacers, to optimise medicine delivery and adherence, and in doing so, improve disease control and quality of life, reduce emergency hospital admissions, and meet health objectives across the motu.
- With the increased use of telehealth services and remote/electronic prescribing, many patients do not physically visit a prescriber practice to be able to receive spacers supplied via PSO's. For these patients a community pharmacy would be their only point of contact.

We urge Pharmac to consider widening access to spacers via prescription at the pharmacy level as a key work stream because:

- The types of spacers would be restricted to the spacer devices currently listed in the Pharmac Pharmaceutical Schedule already for PSO purposes.
- Out of the 300,000 spacer devices provided to medical practices on PSO in the 2023 financial year, we would not expect a significant usage shift to community pharmacy, and we do not foresee a huge number of additional spacer devices being distributed via this route initially, despite the increase to access and equity.

Thank you for your consideration of our proposal. If you have any questions please contact our Senior Advisory Pharmacists, Martin Lowis (martin@pgnz.org.nz, 04 802 8218) or Cathy Martin (cathy@pgnz.org.nz, 04 802 8214).

Yours sincerely,



Nicole Rickman

General Manager – Membership and Professional Services