

20 June 2024

PHARMAC
PO Box 10254
The Terrace
Wellington 6143

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Guild proposal: Listing and funding a ready-made Codeine Linctus product

Thank you for the opportunity to present the following proposal.

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.

As the winter season continues, we anticipate a continued increase in respiratory illnesses, including Covid-19, Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and new concerning strains of influenza (e.g., H5N1). These illnesses often lead to a persistent and debilitating dry cough, creating a high demand for effective cough suppressants.

With the withdrawal of pholcodine products and Gee's Linctus from New Zealand and international markets, patients are being prescribed Codeine Linctus as the only available effective cough suppressant. However pharmacists are currently having to compound this extemporaneous product using codeine tablets or powder, glycerol, and water as per the [Standard Formulae for ECPs and galenicals](#), as a funded product or a non-subsided codeine tablets in a simple syrup base. This process is time-consuming and inefficient, and places additional pressure on pharmacists' time and resources, particularly in the context of the current workforce crisis facing the community pharmacy sector. The true time-related costs of compounding what should be a very cheap product could constitute a barrier to access and equity.

The only comparable products that are available over the counter (OTC), are products containing Dextromethorphan. Dextromethorphan has limited clinical efficacy and a restrictive safety profile, limiting its use. It is also not a funded product.

With this in mind, we would like to propose that Pharmac explore options to list and fund a commercially prepared Codeine Linctus BP in the Pharmaceutical Schedule. This would ensure that patients have timely access to a standardised and effective cough suppressant when clinically appropriately prescribed. The benefits of this proposal include:

1. **Efficiency and convenience:** A commercially prepared Codeine Linctus BP would save pharmacists valuable time and reduce the complexities involved in compounding, allowing them to focus more on patient care.

2. **Quality and consistency:** Commercially prepared Codeine Linctus BP ensures a consistent formulation and dosage, reducing the risk of errors and improving patient outcomes.
3. **Response to increased demand:** With the ongoing surge in respiratory illnesses, having a readily available Codeine Linctus BP will better meet the needs of patients experiencing a chronic dry cough.
4. **Support for pharmacists:** Reducing the compounding burden on pharmacists will help alleviate some of the stress associated with the current workforce shortages and high workload filled with multitasking unexpected and perplexing issues for their patients.
5. **Expand and improve clinical options:** Prescribers will have a proven clinical pathway option which is readily available for the treatment of a dry cough.

We believe that listing and funding a ready-made Codeine Linctus BP is a proactive and necessary step to enhance patient care, access and equity, whilst supporting the community pharmacy workforce during the challenging winter season. We kindly request that Pharmac consider this proposal and engage with relevant stakeholders to assess the feasibility and implementation.

We would welcome discussing this proposal further at your convenience. 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) with any questions and/or comments.

Yours sincerely,



Nicole Rickman

General Manager – Membership and Professional Services