

31 October 2024

PHARMAC
PO Box 10254
The Terrace
Wellington 6143

Sent via email to: marinda.vanzylgreene@pharmac.govt.nz, adrienne.martin@pharmac.govt.nz

Dear Marinda and Adrienne,

Re: Proposal for the implementation of a Brand Switch Fee (BSF) due to changes in the appearance of Teva omeprazole capsules

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 would like to request the implementation of a Brand Switch Fee (BSF) to address the challenges faced at community pharmacy level due to the recent changes of appearances to all strengths of the Teva brand of funded omeprazole capsules, as outlined in the information on the Pharmac website [here](#). Our reasons for this request are:

- The appearance of Teva omeprazole 40mg capsules have changed from a blue/white capsule to a dark grey/light grey capsule. In comparison, the appearance of the Teva omeprazole 20mg capsules have changed from a cream capsule to a blue/white capsule. As a result, the new appearance of the Teva omeprazole 20mg capsule now resembles the previous appearance of the Teva omeprazole 40mg capsule, which could present a risk for patients, who may have relied on visual cues to distinguish between the different strengths of omeprazole capsules.
- Furthermore, the appearance of Teva omeprazole 10mg capsules have changed from a bright yellow capsule to a dark green/white capsule. The new appearance of Teva omeprazole 10mg capsules closely resembles the currently funded Amoxicillin capsules, as neither have any distinguishing markings nor writing on the capsules.
- For this reason, pharmacist intervention and counselling are essential to prevent patient harm and to clarify the changes to each patient, helping to reduce the risk of unintentional misidentification of their medicines. This issue is further amplified by the fact that omeprazole is one of the most prescribed medicines in the country.
- Additionally, given the established familiarity with the previous appearances of different strengths of Teva omeprazole capsules, there is an increased risk of dispensing errors by pharmacy staff who may inadvertently overlook the label and rely on colour cues to identify the correct strength of the omeprazole capsules dispensed.

To support the additional time and resources needed to address safety concerns and dosing errors by patients, we urge Pharmac to implement a BSF for the changes in appearance of the different strengths of Teva omeprazole capsules. Pharmacists will require additional time for patient consultations to explain these changes, adding to their existing workload, especially

given the frequent prescribing of this medicine and the anticipated increase in patient enquiries and potential misunderstandings regarding this medicine's efficacy or dosage.

We believe a BSF will assist in safeguarding patient safety and support community pharmacies as they inform and guide patients through this transition, enabling pharmacists to provide necessary patient counselling and manage any stock discrepancies arising from these changes. We recognise that this change might not align with the usual criteria for applying a BSF, but we ask Pharmac to consider these exceptional circumstances nonetheless.

If you have any questions about our proposal, please contact our Senior Advisory Pharmacists, Martin Lewis (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