

27 January 2022

Adam Irish

Via email: fyi-request-17746-ed74c6ed@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe Adam

Request for information: Preventing bias when considering medicines for funding

Thank you for your request dated 9 December 2021 under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) for questions relating to assessment bias towards new medicines, particularly regarding the new Pfizer antiviral medicine and ivermectin. You wrote:

What systems are in place to ensure that Pharmac doesn't suffer from confirmation bias, group think or a preference towards new medications vs existing licensed expired medicines that aren't supported for an application, due to them being inexpensive.

For example it appears that Pharmac rely on an application for approval of medicines for a different, and if a medicine is out of patient a private pharmaceutical company would have a much larger incentive to make a new drug than prove the efficacy of a preexisting in-expense drug. And as such would not put in an application or do additional research to make the case for it. The pharmaceutical companies would also have a direct incentive to actively discredit or promulgate mistrust of studies that weren't to their financial interests and create a public narrative to support that.

Can New Zealanders have confidence that large pharmaceutical companies which sponsor and fund a significant amount of US media have not deliberately promulgated a narrative of mistrust around the drug Ivermectin. As this looks like it would be financially ruinous to its new Pfizer antiviral, PF-07321332, can New Zealand have confidence that the US media and its media narrative that the drug is just a 'horse medicine' or only for the treatment of parasites has not negatively influenced its assessment as a useful drug in combating Covid-19.

And is our application based system fit for purpose, or does it relies too much on private companies initiating the process. How much do our Pharmac assessors and the Ministry rely on just maintaining a status quo based on overseas decisions where their assessments and scientific assessments may not be completely impartial?

The new Pfizer antiviral, PF-07321332 appears to have the same function as a protease as Ivermectin but as Ivermectin is out of patient and significantly cheaper this could be significantly more adventitious. Has an updated assessment taken place on either of these drugs and are they approved for use in the treatment of Covid-19?

The information in the below video is gathering more attention:

<https://youtu.be/ufy2AweXRkc>

In it Dr. John Campbell appears to be making some compelling claims for the use of Ivermectin, has Pharmac and the Ministry of Health assessed the studies he has cited in relation to an assessment of Ivermectin?

How Pharmac works

Pharmac is the agency that decides which medicines are funded in New Zealand. Our statutory directive is to get the best health outcomes that are reasonably achievable from within the available funding. We also manage the fixed budget (Combined Pharmaceutical Budget) for those medicines.

Medsafe is the authority responsible for evaluating and assessing therapeutic products for use in New Zealand. Generally, before a medicine is funded by Pharmac it needs to be approved by Medsafe.

To learn more about [how Pharmac works](#), and how Pharmac makes funding decisions using [Factors for Consideration](#) please visit our website: <https://pharmac.govt.nz/about/what-we-do/how-pharmac-works/>

Ivermectin

We have previously responded to questions about ivermectin. Please refer to our website for information about why we are not considering ivermectin for the treatment of COVID-19.

[30 Nov 2021 | OIA Response | Why we are not using ivermectin for the treatment of COVID-19 - Pharmac | New Zealand Government](#)

We trust that this information answers your queries. We are making our information more freely available, so we now publish selected OIA responses (excluding personal details) on our website. Please get in touch with us if you have any questions about this.

Yours sincerely



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