



PBS listing a “big win” for thousands of macular disease patients: MDFA

Allowing an additional 4,500 patients to access subsidised medicine to treat macular disease, with a change to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme listing for two key medicines, is a “big win for the macular disease community”, Macular Disease Foundation Australia (MDFA) said today.

The federal Government has expanded the number of macular conditions that can receive subsidised treatment using the drugs Dexamethasone (Ozurdex by Allergan) and Ranibizumab (Lucentis by Novartis).

“MDFA has been an active advocate for the additional PBS listings for these drugs,” CEO Dee Hopkins said.

“According to federal Government figures, this listing will mean an additional 3,300 patients per year will be able to access Ozurdex and a further 1,200 patients a year will be able to access Lucentis.”

The cost savings on the medicine to patients are significant. The Government estimates the cost of Ozurdex will drop from \$1,350 per script to \$39.50, or \$6.40 for concessional patients. Similarly, without the PBS subsidy, Lucentis could cost a patient up to \$7,000 over a year. This will now drop to \$39.50 per script, or \$6.40 with a concession card.

Ozurdex and Lucentis are already used by ophthalmologists to treat macular conditions – but subsidised use of the drug through the PBS was limited to selected conditions,” Ms Hopkins said.

“The expanded listing of Ozurdex on the PBS gives ophthalmologists another subsidised treatment option for patients with reduced vision caused by macular swelling due to a blocked vein in the eye.

“The two new listings for Lucentis on the PBS mean that subsidised treatment is now available for macular conditions similar to wet AMD, where abnormal blood vessels grow under the macula, causing loss of central vision.

“These drugs have the potential to save sight, and in some cases improve vision,” Ms Hopkins said.

“Putting them on the PBS for treatment of a greater number of macular conditions widens the net, which will allow more people than ever before to receive subsidised treatment.

“Macular disease can take many forms. The most common are age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and diabetic eye disease but there are a range of less common – equally devastating – macular conditions that impact the community represented by MDFA,” she said.

“Many of these other macular conditions often impact people who are younger and still in the workforce.

“We must remember that these medicines are treatments – not cures. Patients, in many cases, will continue to need treatment for the rest of their lives. Without a PBS listing, cost is a significant barrier to sight-saving treatment,” Ms Hopkins said.

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