

## Pharmac's Review of Rule 8.1(b): FAQs

### What is rule 8.1(b)?

Since 2005, New Zealand paediatric oncologists have had a special arrangement with Pharmac to access new chemotherapy drugs (rule 8.1(b) of the pharmaceutical schedule). This means that they didn't have to go through the usual Pharmac assessment, approval and funding process.

### Why didn't the usual Pharmac approval process have to be followed?

When Pharmac took over the purchasing of chemotherapy drugs for district health boards in 2005, it was thought that childhood cancer patients could be disadvantaged if the new approval processes were applied to them. The disadvantage could occur due to:

- the small number of childhood cancer patients
- the relatively large number of chemotherapy drugs
- the high participation rates of children with cancer in clinical trials
- the fact that most childhood cancers are acute and need urgent treatment

### Why are they reviewing the rule now?

In May 2021 Pharmac announced that, following a Human Rights complaint, they would be [reviewing rule 8.1\(b\)](#) because concerns had been raised around its fairness when compared with other populations and conditions, as well as the growing costs of new paediatric cancer medicines.

### Does this mean paediatric oncology medicine for New Zealand children will no longer be funded?

The review of rule 8.1(b) has been interpreted as stopping childhood cancer patients from having access to new chemotherapy drugs. This is not the case.

Firstly, both Pharmac and the Minister of Health have guaranteed that all currently used chemotherapy drugs will still be available to future patients. These drugs will continue to be funded by Pharmac and given in public hospitals at no cost to the child's family, as before.

Secondly, Pharmac is discussing with the [National Child Cancer Network](#) how access to new chemotherapy drugs can be continued in a way that manages the costs in a reasonable way and that access is seen to be fair.

However, while there seems to be a commitment to current medicines and patients, the implication for new treatments is less certain. We're extremely concerned that future treatments may not be funded if Pharmac makes changes to rule 8.1(b).

We do not want to see a solution that impacts on the future success of paediatric oncology outcomes for Kiwi kids, or sends them backwards.

### How can I submit my feedback?

Pharmac is seeking feedback to help them understand the impact the rule has on paediatric cancer care in New Zealand.

As part of Child Cancer Foundation's mission to advance improvements to childhood cancer care and advocate for the best possible treatment options for Kiwi kids, our priority is to ensure that the families we support have their voices heard throughout this review process.



We will be collating feedback from our members and those we deliver services to and submitting this to Pharmac on behalf of children and families impacted by childhood cancer in New Zealand. We also encourage you to make your own submission and reach out to [your local MP](#) to help generate as much momentum around this issue as possible.

We have been granted an extension on the submission timeframe, however we only have until the **end of January 2023** to make a submission in response. Therefore, we need to act urgently.

### **Where can I find out more?**

If you would like to know more and find out how you can take action, we invite you to attend our [virtual panel discussion](#) on Monday 12 December 2022.

See more information and RSVP [here](#).

You can also read the full Pharmac consultation paper [here](#).