



Access to Medicines NGO Coalition

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The Access to Medicines Coalition (ATM), a group of 26 registered charities, representing hundreds of thousands of New Zealanders, their families and care-givers has stated that their support of the government's Medicine Strategy has been betrayed by District Health Boards' and Pharmac's failure to properly implement the government's strategy. .

The ATM Coalition welcomed the *Medicines New Zealand Strategy* and *Action Plan* issued by the government in December 2007. However they state that a failure to implement those strategies was dramatically illustrated by a token investment in the Community Pharmaceutical budget announced in July 2008. This will result in a decrease in purchasing power and minimal chance that high priority medicines already recommended for use by Pharmac's expert committees will be funded in the coming year.

John Forman, spokesperson for the ATM Coalition, said that the government's strategy had specifically included community values, ethics and equity in decision criteria about medicine funding, to balance the previous narrow focus on cost issues and budget management. These crucial principles newly added to the decision making criteria, have been systematically ignored by Pharmac who have gone back to their bad old ways in how they operate and the decisions they make.

The Medicine Strategy also mandated a better system for DHBs and Pharmac to work out a medicine budget request to the Minister.

Equitable and affordable Access To Medicines for all

Members: ADDvocate, Alzheimers New Zealand, Arthritis New Zealand, Asthma New Zealand, Balance, Breast Cancer Aotearoa Coalition, Cancer Society, Carers New Zealand, Continence Association, Cystic Fibrosis New Zealand, Diabetes New Zealand, Diabetes Youth, Epilepsy New Zealand, IDFNZ, Kidney Kids, NZ LAM Trust, Leukaemia and Blood Foundation, Lysosomal Diseases New Zealand, Multiple Sclerosis Society of New Zealand, Myeloma Matters, New Zealand AIDS Foundation, New Zealand Organisation for Rare Disorders, Parkinsons New Zealand, Prader-Willi Syndrome, Prostate Cancer Foundation, Schizophrenia New Zealand.

Instead we have just had another round where the lowest-common-denominator amongst DHBs is calling the tune on the money allocated.

“The paltry allocation for the new medicines budget seems like the nail in the coffin for any hope of a new way forward under the Medicines Strategy”, says Forman. “It compounds the problem of rapid backsliding by Pharmac and DHBs on the important decision principles and budget setting process, to leave the strategy implementation in tatters”,

The ATM Coalition demands action from government to bring drug-funding agency PHARMAC and DHBs into line, and insist they follow through with the promises made in the Medicines New Zealand Strategy to deliver access to medicines guided by principles of equity, effectiveness, confidence, value for money, affordability and transparency, and with an adequate budget to do the job”.

Mr. Forman says that “the ATM recognizes the great potential of the Medicine Strategy but calls on the government to provide direction to ensure there is evidence of commitment to it, and that Pharmac and DHBs actually deliver a fair and functional system guided by the government’s principles and promises set out in the strategy”.

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Please contact John Forman, Spokesperson for the ATM Coalition, on (04) 566 7707 or 027 240 3377.