

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2012-2013, 17 & 19 October 2012

Question: E12-178

OUTCOME 2: Access to Pharmaceutical Services

Topic: Chemotherapy Drugs

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Number of pages: 2

Senator: Senator Boyce

Question:

Has the Government analysed the impact on patients, community pharmacies, private hospitals and public hospitals of the 76.2% price reduction on docetaxel, scheduled for 1 December, and of other reductions that have significantly reduced prices of chemotherapy drugs over the last three years?

What have been the findings from this analysis?

Answer:

Docetaxel represents about four per cent of all chemotherapy prescriptions.

For some time the Government has been paying 20 to 75 per cent above the market price for the cancer medicine – docetaxel. Patients benefit when medicines become cheaper. By paying less for older medicines, like docetaxel, the Government is able to continue to list new cancer medicines. Prices paid by cancer patients for Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medicines are not affected by the 1 December price reduction. For cancer medicines, patients pay no more than one PBS co-payment for the first prescription dispensed, either \$5.90 or \$36.10 for the first injection/infusion of the drug, but nothing for the repeats. Pharmacists and hospitals cannot charge patients extra for PBS medicines.