

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2014 - 2015, 22 October 2014

Ref No: SQ14-001138

OUTCOME: 2 - Access to Pharmaceutical Services

Topic: Hepatitis C/Access to Pharmaceutical Products

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Di Natale, Richard

Question:

How do new treatments, such as Sovaldi compare in cost to the 48 week combination therapy using interferon and ribavirin and what is the cost of a 48 week treatment, including GP consultations, blood tests and so on?

Answer:

The asking price of treatment with sofosbuvir (Sovaldi®) was provided to the Department of Health by its sponsor, Gilead, on a commercial-in-confidence basis. However, the cost per person is estimated to be substantially higher than treatments already available on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) with a total cost to the Government exceeding \$1 billion over five years.

In 2013-14 the cost to the PBS of other drugs to treat hepatitis were as follows:

- \$43.7 million for Telaprevir (Incivo®) and boceprevir (Victrelis®); and
- \$28.8 million for the combination interferon and ribavirin therapy (Pegasys RBV®).

The course of treatment and therefore the potential cost depends on the patient's response to the therapy. As an example, the cost of treatment with boceprevir (24 weeks) with interferon and ribavirin (48 weeks) or the cost of telaprevir (12 weeks) with interferon and ribavirin (48 weeks) is about \$45,000.

All patients with hepatitis C require GP consultations and blood tests to diagnose and manage their condition.