

31 May 2010

Ms Naomi Bleeser
Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Bleeser

Re: Senate Community Affairs References Committee Inquiry into Consumer Access to Pharmaceutical Benefits – Response to Questions on Notice

Sanofi-aventis appreciates the opportunity to provide answers to questions taken on notice at the Senate Committee Inquiry hearing on Friday 7 May 2010.

Companies were asked to provide feedback on:

1. *A suitable definition of interchangeability and what we consider should be a fuller more independent analysis of clinical evidence in determining medicines to be interchangeable.*

Medicines Australia, the organisation representing the innovative pharmaceutical industry in Australia, has provided a supplementary submission to the Committee in which it has outlined criteria that should be met in determining whether or not medicines are interchangeable and the transparency required in any process to determine that medicines are interchangeable.

Sanofi-aventis endorses the definition and process outlined by Medicines Australia, but would add to point six of Medicines Australia's definition of interchangeability that:

The PBAC must be satisfied that none of the drugs under consideration have unique evidence demonstrating clinical utility in given subpopulations or demonstrating clinical superiority in identifiable sub-populations.

2. *Information as to the exact cost difference of the changes in terms of drugs impacted by the therapeutic groups.*

The published price of Actonel[®] Once a Week for the treatment of osteoporosis in the Pharmaceutical Benefits Schedule is \$53.34. The price to consumers is the co-payment price of \$33.30 for general patients and \$5.40 for concessional patients.

Formation of a bisphosphonates therapeutic group including Actonel[®] would reduce the reimbursed price to that of the benchmark bisphosphonate. However, the final price of Actonel[®] would be subject to whether or not a therapeutic group premium is applied, and sanofi-aventis is unable to comment on future potential decisions about therapeutic group premiums due to reasons of commercial confidentiality.

Please feel free to contact me on (02) 8666 2360 should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

Rowena Cowan
Government Relations Manager