

July 7, 2006

## **APPROVING DRUGS IN ONTARIO**

### **Ontario's drug review process**

When considering funding for new drugs, Ontario relies on the expert advice of medical professionals who are members of the Drug Quality and Therapeutics Committee (DQTC). The DQTC thoroughly reviews and evaluates the clinical evidence, scientific data and cost-effectiveness of drug products and makes a recommendation to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on whether funding should be provided.

### **Cancer drug review process**

In early 2005, the Ministry established a joint sub-committee of the DQTC and Cancer Care Ontario, the Ontario government's principal advisor on cancer care. The sub-committee provides expert advice to the DQTC, whose recommendation on whether to provide funding is made to the minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

This new joint advisory body streamlines the cancer drug approval process and ensures a consistent approach to drug funding decisions. It also means the province can update its cancer drug coverage more frequently as new drugs are recommended and approved.

### **How The Four New Cancer Drugs Work**

- Velcade is an intravenous drug that is toxic to cancer cells, preventing their reproduction or growth. Velcade is used for the treatment of multiple myeloma when previous drug therapies have failed. Multiple myeloma is a blood cancer that affects the bone marrow.
- Taxotere is also an intravenous drug that is used as part of a drug regimen used to treat early stage breast cancer. It works by interfering with the ability of cancer cells to divide and grow, eventually leading to their destruction.
- Tomudex is used to treat mesothelioma, a lung cancer that may develop through exposure to asbestos. The drug interferes with the ability of cancer cells to divide and grow.
- Tarceva is an oral drug used to treat late-stage lung cancer where other therapies have failed. This drug is toxic to cancer cells, preventing their reproduction or growth. It targets one of the factors critical to the growth of cells involved in the development of Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer, thus decreasing the growth rate of lung cancer cells

## **Transparent Drug System for Patients Act**

The McGuinty government is further improving the drug approval process through the Transparent Drug System for Patients Act. This act will allow the government to improve access to drug treatment and deliver better value for money to the taxpayers of Ontario. The government's plan to reform the drug system includes:

- Improving patient access to drugs through new Conditional Listings, Exceptional Access mechanisms, and rapid reviews of innovative drugs
- Listening to the views of Ontarians through a new Citizen's Council that will advise the Ministry on the social aspects of drug policies and priorities
- Utilizing the expertise of Ontario's pharmacists through a new Pharmacy Council to advise the Ministry and the Executive Officer of the public drug programs
- Strengthening transparency by giving patients a role in drug listing recommendations of the Committee to Evaluate Drugs.

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