

Cancer Society of New Zealand Submission on the Medicines Amendment Bill

About the Cancer Society of New Zealand

The Cancer Society of New Zealand is the country's leading organisation dedicated to reducing the incidence and impact of cancer in Aotearoa. We are committed to working with communities and decision makers by providing leadership and advocacy in cancer control, with core services in information and support, research and cancer prevention.

This submission has been prepared by Emma Shields. It has been approved by Nicola Coom, Chief Executive and Dr. Kate Gregory, Medical Director.

Submission contact:

Emma Shields NZRD, Evidence and Insights Lead
emma@cancer.org.nz

Find us online:

cancer.org.nz

facebook.com/cancersocietyNZ

instagram.com/cancersocietynewzealand

The Cancer Society of New Zealand

Level 13, Ranchod Tower, 39 The Terrace, Wellington 6011 | PO Box 651, Wellington 6140

04 494 7270 | Cancer Information Helpline 0800 CANCER (226 237)

We wish to make the following comments and recommendations:

The Cancer Society of New Zealand strongly supports the Medicines Amendment Bill. We welcome the proposed changes as practical and overdue improvements that will help improve health outcomes for people across Aotearoa, including people affected by cancer.

Improving Access Through International Verification

We particularly support the introduction of a verification pathway allowing medicines approved by two recognised overseas regulators to be considered for distribution in New Zealand. This has the potential to significantly reduce delays in accessing new treatments.

Currently, the approval process in New Zealand can lag well behind other comparable countries. For example, analysis by the IQVIA found that New Zealand ranked last amongst the OECD20 for the number of publicly funded modern medicines and that New Zealand was on average the second slowest country in the OECD20 to publicly fund registered modern medicines¹. For people living with cancer, these delays can mean missing the window of opportunity for more effective treatment or access to less toxic and more targeted therapies.

The Cancer Society believes this delay is unacceptable. Time matters when it comes to cancer. Every day without access to proven, effective treatment options can impact survival and quality of life. We welcome the Bill's aim to align New Zealand with international best practice and reduce unnecessary regulatory duplication.

Improving Flexibility for Medicine Prescribing and Administration

We cautiously support provisions in the Bill that will allow other regulated professionals—such as pharmacists, nurse practitioners, midwives and optometrists—to prescribe substitute medicines within their scope of practice. This could help improve continuity of care, especially in rural or underserved communities, where timely access to medical practitioners may be limited.

However careful regulation and monitoring and evaluation of this must occur to ensure it does not lead to over-reliance on these groups.

We also strongly support efforts to correct ongoing workforce deficiencies.

Modernising the Medicines Classification Committee

Finally, we endorse the modernisation of the membership requirements for the Medicines Classification Committee. Ensuring it reflects a broader and more responsive range of expertise is essential to keeping pace with innovation and ensuring that decision-making around access is fit for purpose.

¹ IQVIA. A Decade of Modern Medicines: An International Comparison 2011 – 2020 Commissioned by Medicines New Zealand. 2021 Available at: https://www.medicinesnz.co.nz/fileadmin/user_upload/IQVIA_Report_-_A_Decade_of_Modern_Medicines_An_International_Comparison_2011-2020_FINAL.pdf

Conclusion

Improving timely, equitable access to medicines is a vital part of delivering better outcomes for people affected by cancer. This Nill is a step in the right direction and aligns with the Cancer Society's vision of a future free from cancer.

The Cancer Society urge the Committee to support the passage of this Bill.

The Cancer Society of New Zealand

Level 13, Ranchod Tower, 39 The Terrace, Wellington 6011 | PO Box 651, Wellington 6140

04 494 7270 | Cancer Information Helpline 0800 CANCER (226 237)