

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Question no: 1

Use of the Quinolone anti-malarial drugs Mefloquine and Tafenoquine in the
Australian Defence Force
Public Hearing, Thursday 11 October 2018
Questions Taken on Notice
Department of Health/Therapeutic Goods Administration

Senator Gallacher asked:

CHAIR: Those 242 adverse comments, if you like—

Dr Skerritt: Reports, yes.

CHAIR: have come from a variety of sectors?

Dr Skerritt: A variety of sources, from industry, from the public, from individual patients and doctors.

CHAIR: Would any of them have come from Defence?

Dr Skerritt: I'd have to take that on notice.

Answer:

As of 11 October 2018, the TGA Adverse Event Management System (AEMS) does not contain any adverse event reports for mefloquine where the reporter identified as being from the Australian Defence Force (ADF). While no reporters are clearly identified as ADF personnel, over half the reports were submitted by health professionals. The data collected does not include the affiliation of the reporter, and therefore it remains possible that some reports were made by ADF health professionals.

There are 26 adverse event reports where the case narrative makes reference to one or more of the following: “defence”, “military”, “veteran”, “service”, “army”, “soldier”, “deploy” and/or “Timor”. However, inclusion of these terms does not necessarily indicate the report source.

It is important to note that the AEMS dataset may contain duplicate reports as an individual case may be separately reported from several sources (eg the patient themselves and the doctor involved in their care). Reports are de-identified and therefore it is not possible to identify duplicates in all instances.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Question no: 2

Use of the Quinoline anti-malarial drugs Mefloquine and Tafenoquine in the
Australian Defence Force
Public Hearing, Thursday 11 October 2018
Questions Taken on Notice
Department of Health

Senators Gallacher and Moore asked:

CHAIR: But do we know there's 25,000 scripts a year issued for mefloquine?

Dr Skerritt: We know the numbers of scripts for those that are issued under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. Again, we could take that question on notice. I don't have the information on numbers of scripts for—

Senator MOORE: So what scripts wouldn't be issued under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme? You said most scripts are under the—

Dr Skerritt: Most scripts are under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

...

Senator MOORE: It would be a useful thing for the committee, when we're talking about numbers and impact, to know exactly how much each drug has prescribed.

Dr Skerritt: We could provide the PBS information on notice.

Senator MOORE: Sure, yes.

Dr Skerritt: But the department could provide on notice the total number of PBS scripts.

Senator MOORE: Can we get that?

Answer:

The figure of 25,000 scripts per year came from submission from agencies other than the Department of Health. Accurate publicly available data is available for the numbers of prescriptions issued under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), and most prescriptions of most prescription medicines are issued under the PBS.

However mefloquine is not reimbursed under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. The confusion arose because the Australian Statistics on Medicines data is published on the PBS website (www.pbs.gov.au) and until 2012 included some data on the numbers of mefloquine prescriptions.