

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2010-11, 20 October 2010

Question: E10-267

OUTCOME 2: Access to Pharmaceutical Services

Topic: ERBITUX® (CETUXIMAB)

Written Question on Notice

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

Similarly, the Health Minister has had for several months a PBAC recommendation to list the cancer therapy Erbitux on the PBS - does the department know when the Minister and Cabinet will make a decision to list this vital therapy to assist patients suffering from bowel cancer?

Answer:

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) recommendation of July 2010 was primarily based on the evidence from the CO17 clinical trial (Karapetis et al 2008) in metastatic colorectal cancer, which demonstrated an increase in survival of on average 4.7 months when ERBITUX was used after chemotherapy in patients with wild-type K-RAS disease.

To determine whether a patient has K-RAS wild type disease, a genetic test is required. A genetic test to determine whether a patient has K-RAS wild type disease is not currently funded through the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS). A submission for an MBS item for K-RAS testing associated with the proposed listing of Erbitux on the PBS, which if listed on the PBS, is expected to be considered by the Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC) in December 2010. MSAC is an independent scientific committee which assesses the safety and effectiveness of new medical technologies and procedures before they are recommended for public funding.

Additional steps are also needed to be taken before a listing is achieved, such as pricing negotiations with the product's sponsor, finalisation of the conditions for listing, quality and availability checks and consideration by Cabinet.