

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2010-11, 20 October 2010

Question: E10-268

OUTCOME 2: Access to Pharmaceutical Services

Topic: VIDAZA® (AZACITIDINE)

Written Question on Notice

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

- a) In relation to the drug Vidaza for acute myeloid leukemia, Mr Andrew Stewart told Senate Estimates in June that the PBAC had recommended subsidising the drug in September last year - more than a year ago - that the Government had agreed on the price it would pay for the drug in December and that essentially everyone was now waiting on the Minister and Cabinet to sign off on the listing of Vidaza - Has that happened yet?
- b) Does the department have any idea when the Minister and Cabinet might get around to approving this critical drug?
- c) How many other vital drugs and treatments like these are awaiting this Government's sign-off?

Answer:

- a) On 9 December 2010 the Minister for Health and Ageing announced that Vidaza will be listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme from 1 February 2011.
- b) Refer to a).
- c) As also announced on 9 December 2010, the following high cost drugs were also approved by Government for listing:
  - Soliris® (eculizumab) for the treatment of Paroxysmal Nocturnal Haemoglobinuria, a life threatening blood disorder from 1 January 2011;
  - Avodart® (dutasteride) for the treatment of benign prostatic hyperplasia (enlarged prostate) from 1 February 2011; and
  - Nicotine transdermal patches and Champix® (varenicline) as an aid to smoking cessation from 1 February 2011.