

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 19 October 2011

Question: E11-103

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: THALIDOMIDE

Written Question on Notice

Senator Boyce asked:

- a) Is the minister aware of the current availability of thalidomide in Australia?
- b) Does the minister know what the current indication is for thalidomide in Australia?
- c) Is the minister aware of previous problems with the availability of thalidomide in Australia?
- d) What were those problems?

Answer:

- a) Yes.
- b) Thalidomide is used to treat multiple myeloma, a cancer of the bone marrow, in combination with other medicines (melphalan and prednisone), for the treatment of newly diagnosed multiple myeloma in patients aged over 65 years or patients who cannot receive high dose chemotherapy. Thalidomide may also be used by itself for the treatment of multiple myeloma after other treatments have failed. It is also used in combination with dexamethasone at the start of high dose chemotherapy treatment and bone marrow transplants.

Thalidomide may also be used for the treatment of the skin symptoms associated with moderate to severe erythema nodosum leprosum which can occur in leprosy to help to stop the skin symptoms returning.

- c) Yes.
- d) Serious congenital malformations to a foetus if given to women during pregnancy.