

SANE Australia calls for PBS inclusion of Invega Sustenna

SANE Australia, the national charity for people affected by mental illness, has called on the federal government to approve Invega Sustenna, a treatment for schizophrenia, for inclusion on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

The federal government has indefinitely deferred the approval of Invega Sustenna (IS) and five other medications, subject to Cabinet approval, this is despite the drugs being recommended for listing on the PBS by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee.

SANE Australia's Executive Director, Barbara Hocking, says she fears that many people living with schizophrenia, who are not being helped by medications currently available, will miss out on the opportunity to benefit from IS. Very few, if any, will be able to afford the full cost of \$400 per month for a private prescription

'The current PBAC system is designed to ensure only appropriate drugs are added to the PBS, with the advisory committee providing independent and expert advice to the federal government,' Ms Hocking said.

'This deferral will lead to uncertainty and future politicisation of the PBAC process.'

SANE Australia believes it is critical to include new medications for mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, on the PBS. Medication is often the cornerstone of treatment and enables people to benefit from other essential non-drug community and education programs. Choice and convenience in medication also leads to improved adherence to medication and a better recovery.

Choice

Improve the range of medications available

A larger range of available medications increases the chance of finding an effective one. People with mental illness respond to medications in individual ways and finding the best one is often a process of trial and error. The inclusion of IS on the PBS will provide consumers with a wider choice.

Convenience

Improve the ease of taking medication

Monthly injections with IS provide consumers with improved convenience, as it is much less burdensome than fortnightly or daily treatments. Injections in the arm are more convenient and dignified than in the buttock.

Adherence

Medication tolerance also improves commitment to treatment and quality of life

Increased choice and convenience improves adherence to treatment and increases the likelihood of positive outcomes. This leads to fewer relapses, reduced ongoing healthcare costs, better recovery and increased education and employment participation.

SANE Australia offers a wide range of resources to assist people diagnosed with mental illness and their families.

Call the SANE Helpline on 1800 18 SANE (7263) or visit sane.org for more information.

SANE Australia

A national charity working for a better life for people affected by mental illness.

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