

Australian Govt to invest \$200M for cancer medicines

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From 1 March 2019, patients will be able to access new cancer medicines for just \$40.30 per script, or \$6.50 with a concession card.



The Australian Government is investing more than \$200 million to list four new breakthrough cancer treatments on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), saving patients up to a quarter of a million dollars a year.

The new PBS cancer listings from 1 March 2019 include:

- **Venclexta® (venetoclax)**, which will be listed on the PBS for the first time for people with relapsed or refractory chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL), a slow-growing cancer that affects white blood cells. The medicine blocks a protein that helps the cancer cells to survive and may slow the spread of the cancer. It is expected 420 patients each year will benefit from this important listing. Without the PBS subsidy, they would have to pay around \$7,000 per script or \$165,000 per course of treatment over a two year period. This has the potential to improve the lives of some patients with CLL who will be given a new treatment option. The anti-cancer drug venetoclax was developed at Melbourne's own Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research.
- **Combination therapy Opdivo® (nivolumab) and Yervoy® (ipilimumab)** will become available for the previously untreated stage IV clear cell variant renal cell carcinoma, an advanced type of kidney cancer. More than 300 patients a year will be able to access this treatment that helps the immune system attack and destroy cancer cells. The PBS subsidy means they will not need to pay \$254,200 per course of treatment.
- **Keytruda® (pembrolizumab)** will become available for patients with locally advanced or metastatic urothelial cancer, which is a cancer of the urinary system that has spread or cannot be removed by surgery. This medicine helps make cancer cells more vulnerable to attack by the body's own immune system. This is the first PBS immunotherapy treatment for this condition. More than 430 patients each year will be able to access this medicine through the PBS instead of paying more than \$91,000 per course of treatment.
- **Lenvima® (lenvatinib)** will be available for patients with advanced hepatocellular carcinoma (liver cancer). This medicine may slow the rate at which the cancer cells multiply and the tumour grows. Without PBS subsidy, approximately 618 patients would pay \$9,600 per script or more than \$62,000 per course of treatment.