

29 August 2025

To: Pharmac

Re: Information about zolmitriptan application: New research and seeking an update

From:

Migraine Foundation Aotearoa New Zealand

www.migrainefoundation.org.nz

Clinical Advisory Group

Dr Pyari Bose, Consultant Neurologist and Headache Specialist, Auckland

Dr Desiree Fernandez, Consultant Neurologist and Headache Specialist, Nelson

Dr Rosamund Hill, Consultant Neurologist and Headache Specialist, Auckland

Dr Kiri Brickell, Consultant Neurologist, Auckland

Dr Jonathan Kennedy, General Practitioner, Wellington

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Contact

Sarah Cahill, Chair and Co-founder

Migraine Foundation Aotearoa New Zealand

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Zolmitriptan funding application

We acknowledge and thank Pharmac for its decision in July 2024 not to decline the funding application for zolmitriptan. We strongly opposed the declining of this application, for reasons outlined in our submission (attached for context).

We note that Pharmac at the time said:

We will take this information to one of our Advisory Committees in the future for further consideration.¹

In addition, in response to a request from Pharmacy Today about where Pharmac was at with considering funding of zolmitriptan, on 2 July David Hughes responded Pharmac 'would welcome further discussions with suppliers to progress the application'.

New research on triptans in Aotearoa New Zealand

In June–July this year, we undertook an online survey of people with migraine in Aotearoa NZ to find out more about the use of triptans and the need for more acute treatment options. We had 611 survey respondents. We also specifically asked people about their experience and interest in zolmitriptan nasal spray. Only a small proportion of survey respondents had previously used zolmitriptan nasal spray, but 69%

¹

<https://www.pharmac.govt.nz/news-and-resources/consultations-and-decisions/decision-to-decline-inactive-funding-applications-july-24>

would like to try and 4% would use it again. The nasal spray formulation was particularly appealing, as noted by this respondent:

"I have used the nasal triptan when I was younger and found that amazing. As I tend to vomit and the sumatriptan just doesn't work as it doesn't absorb". (35–44 year old NZ European male)

As noted in our submission on the zolmitriptan application, migraine treatment guidelines recommend trying at least three different triptans if one does not initially work. People with migraine can only be defined as 'refractory' to triptan treatment if they haven't had success with three or more triptans. **No one in Aotearoa NZ can be defined as refractory because we only have two triptans.** This is not emblematic of a high quality health service.

Survey respondents identified a need not only for more triptans in NZ but a wider range of effective and funded acute and preventive migraine medication. In the absence of the newer migraine-specific acute treatments that are available in other countries but not in NZ (e.g. ubrogepant, zavegepant, rimegepant, lasmiditan), having three funded triptans that included a nasal spray option, would at least bring NZ up to a minimum standard of migraine acute treatment.

We have attached a report on the results of our survey, which will be published on our website.

Next steps

We would like to hear from Pharmac what the next steps are in progressing the zolmitriptan application, specifically:

- When will an Advisory Committee reconsider this application and which Committee?
- How will Pharmac include consumer and other expert advice into its consideration?
- What is being done to re-engage with a pharmaceutical supplier of zolmitriptan?

Migraine Foundation Aotearoa New Zealand would be very happy to present the results of our survey and discuss the need for additional triptans in NZ with an Advisory Committee (as we did at the Neurological Advisory Committee during their assessment of funding applications for Emgality, Aimovig and Aquipta) or with others involved in the next steps of this application.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

Sarah Cahill



About us

[Migraine Foundation Aotearoa New Zealand](https://migraine.org.nz) is the only migraine charity in Aotearoa New Zealand, established in 2022 with the mission to raise awareness of the impact of migraine disease and support people living with migraine.