

## **Online submission to PBAC regarding Ocrevus®**

### **Submissions to be lodged by 7 June at:**

[https://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/PBAC\\_online\\_submission\\_form](https://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/PBAC_online_submission_form)

**Medicine:** Ocrevus® (ocrelizumab)

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### **Declaration of interest:**

MS Australia is making this submission as we have an interest in the health and well-being of all people with MS. MS Australia is the national peak body for people living with MS in Australia. We work with governments at all levels, engaging on the issues that concern the lives of people living with MS, their families and carers, the community and the economy. We declare that we have received funding support from Roche and from other pharmaceutical companies with an interest in MS in the form of grants for advocacy activities.

### **Consumer input:**

MS Australia is writing to support the inclusion of the medication ocrelizumab (marketing name Ocrevus®) to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). As the national peak body for people with MS we are proud to advocate on behalf of our member organisations and the MS community. One area we are particularly passionate about is the provision of more affordable and accessible treatments that can improve the lives of people with MS.

There are currently more than 23,000 people living with MS across the country. MS can be a particularly debilitating disease with an unpredictable disease course. No two cases of MS are the same. There is no one-size fits all treatment for people living with MS and to date, there is no known cure.

The challenges faced by people with MS can be significant and can have a devastating impact on their families and the wider community. Relapses can result in short term or long term disability, resulting in the need for physical and/or psychological care and support, medical investigations, treatments and hospitalisation.

These symptoms, or the gradual progression of the disease through relapses, mean that the majority of people with MS are unable to retain their employment. In fact, people with MS are more likely to be unemployed than those with any other chronic disease. This contributes to an increasing economic burden of MS on the rest of society. The economic cost of MS to the Australian community has been estimated to be around \$1.04 billion a year.

Being able to better manage and limit the frequency and impact of relapses can help alleviate the burden of MS on the community and the individual.

Ocrevus is a monoclonal antibody that reduces the numbers of B cells in the immune system, thought to be involved in the inflammatory attacks that cause MS relapses. The first dose is given as two intravenous infusions, two weeks apart, and each subsequent dose is given six monthly thereafter.

In a clinical trial comparing people receiving Ocrevus treatment to those on interferon beta-1a, those on Ocrevus had a reduced relapse rate of 46%, a slower disability progression, and a 94% lower number of gadolinium-enhancing lesions.

As with all MS medications, the efficacy, side-effect profiles and tolerability of a drug can vary greatly between individuals, and it is for this reason that a range of affordable treatment options is necessary to increase the chance of every individual finding an effective and well tolerated treatment that suits their individual circumstances. With a different mechanism of action, different method and timing of delivery, Ocrevus has been shown to be largely well tolerated by people with MS.

It has shown a high level of efficacy in comparison to first-generation MS treatments with, importantly, a relatively good safety-profile. Serious infections occurred in 1.3% of people receiving Ocrevus treatment, and neoplasms occurred in 0.5%. The most common side effect, infusion-related reactions, occurred in 34.3% of people being treated with Ocrevus.

Overall, MS Australia believes ocrelizumab provides another viable treatment option that will help to reduce the burden for many people with MS and its potential effectiveness at reducing relapse rates and severity could allow people with MS to maintain parts of their lifestyle for longer, such as employment, physical activity and exercise, as well as travel and socialising with friends.

Whilst these elements may not seem particularly significant, together they provide a person with MS purpose, focus, independence and drive which can be very useful in maintaining a high quality of life and staying on top of their symptoms. More broadly, it can ultimately mean less time in hospital, reducing the drain on valuable medical and disability resources, a lower cost for at home modifications and support, and prolonged employment, which helps to reduce the economic impact of MS on society.

Pending a positive assessment of efficacy and safety from the Therapeutic Goods Administration, this medication will make a valuable addition to the repertoire of medications available to people with MS and their neurologists. It will allow for an appropriate treatment choice to be made according to the efficacy and possible side-effects in relation to an individual's circumstances and will help to alleviate the economic cost of MS to individuals, their families and the broader community.

We appreciate you considering this treatment for inclusion on the PBS.

**How did you learn about this consumer submission process?**

From PBAC web-site.

**SUBMIT (BUTTON)**