

11 October 2011

Proposal to Cease Schedule publication in Microsoft Access format

PHARMAC is seeking feedback on a proposal to reduce the number of formats in which the Pharmaceutical Schedule is published. In particular it is proposed to cease publication in the Microsoft Access format from 1 March 2012. This is in line with the policy stated on website where the data files are published, namely:

“The printed Schedule is produced from the XML file using XSLT and TeX, so the XML files are preferred over the MSAccess databases contained in the zip files. The MSAccess files are necessary for some legacy systems, but their publication will be discontinued as soon as is practicable.”

From 1 January 2012, the XML file will include the early notification of Sole Subsidised Supply status that is currently only available in the Microsoft Access file.

Feedback sought

PHARMAC welcomes feedback on this proposal. To provide feedback, please submit it in writing by **Friday, 7 November 2011** to:

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All feedback received before the closing date will be considered by PHARMAC's Board (or Acting Chief Executive acting under delegated authority) prior to making a decision on this proposal.

Details of the proposal

Following the cessation of the Microsoft Access publication, the full Pharmaceutical Schedule would remain available as:

1. Extensible Markup Language (XML)
2. Portable document format (pdf)
3. Paper hardcopy distributed three times per year
4. The PHARMAC online Schedule (HTML)

Unlike the Microsoft Access publication, the last 3 above are all derived directly from the XML document.

Three aspects of the Microsoft Access publication are not currently included in the XML:

1. Subsidy and restriction history
2. Supplier details
3. Early notification of Sole Subsidised Supply status.

Subsidy and restriction history

The subsidy and restriction history in the Microsoft Access publication is not completely accurate, because changes to therapeutic groups or pharmaceutical names are applied retrospectively. Accurate historical data can therefore only be obtained from previously published XML files. Software that requires access to historical data should use a pathway analogous to a human using the paper Schedule, namely first select date (edition) then drug and finally subsidies and rules.

Supplier details

Because of the complexity of the supply chain, and the inability to easily distinguish between manufacturers, wholesales, sponsors etc, publication of this data by PHARMAC is not thought to be appropriate.

Early notification of Sole Subsidised Supply status

The XML file will be updated to include early notification of Sole Subsidised Supply status. Two methods are being considered:

- A. Include the start date as the value of the *SoleSupply* attribute eg:
SoleSupply="true" becomes SoleSupply="2014-06-30".

For backward compatibility, the datatype would be a union of boolean and date:

```
<xs:simpleType name="SSType">  
  <xs:union memberTypes="xs:boolean xs:date"/>  
</xs:simpleType>
```

This is a minimal change, and may not even require existing subscriber software to be amended; however, it does not indicate the end date which could be equally important.

- B. Replace the *SoleSupply* attribute with 2 new attributes (*SoleSupplyFrom* and *SoleSupplyTo*) eg: SoleSupplyFrom="2011-02-01" and SoleSupplyTo="2014-06-30".

Only future dates would be included, so there would be no *SoleSupplyFrom* attribute for items with current Sole Subsidised Supply status.

Background

When the printed version of the Pharmaceutical Schedule was manually typeset, there was some uncertainty as to whether that or the Microsoft Access database was the "official" Schedule. This has diminished considerably with automated typesetting. However, while most Schedule publications depend directly on the XML version, the Microsoft Access database does not. It does share the same source as the XML, but in a format which is incompatible with the printed version.

This proposal enables a single publicly available dataset to be rendered into the various forms required by subscribers.