

Health and Social Services Committee

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Meeting date: Wednesday 13 December 2006

Venue: Committee Room 1, Senedd, National Assembly for Wales

Title: Review of Cancer Services for the People Of Wales – Evidence from the All Wales Medicines Strategy Group

Respondent: Professor Philip A Routledge of Cardiff University, responding on behalf of the All-Wales Medicines Strategy Group (AWMSG, of which I am Acting Chairman), and the Welsh Medicines Partnership (WMP), of which I am Medical Director.

I am content for this evidence to be published.

My comments relate to the question raised by Dr David Lloyd (63) concerning the means by which new cancer treatments are appraised.

AWMSG has recently been informed that they will be supported to appraise in a timely fashion, up to 32 new cancer, cardiac and high cost drugs in the financial year 2007-8. Since that announcement, significant progress has been made by AWMSG and its professional support network, WMP in taking the process forward.

A paper detailing the new streamlined process was tabled at a recent meeting of AWMSG in December 2006. A proposed membership of a new sub-group of AWMSG, the New Medicines Group (NMG) was discussed and agreed. NMG will appraise evidence on clinical effectiveness and cost effectiveness of newly licensed medicines six times yearly and present its recommendations to AWMSG for final appraisal, also six times yearly (rather than quarterly as before). Proposed dates for meetings of the NMG and AWMSG were also tabled and agreed. Finally, the timelines involved for submission of appropriate new medicines by the pharmaceutical manufacturers were discussed and agreed.

The new process will continue to receive input from patient groups, so that patient involvement is preserved. Close links will continue with the Cancer Services Coordinating Group (CSCG) to ensure that specialist input and advice is optimal. Meetings of AWMSG will continue to take place in public so that transparency of the process is maintained.

A meeting has also been held with representatives of the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industries (ABPI) in Wales, from which has come a commitment to continued engagement with the Therapeutic Development Appraisal (TDA) process in Wales. I have also recently met with representatives from the National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) and the Scottish Medicines Consortium to discuss issues related to medicines appraisal, and continuing liaison is

planned.

Recently licensed products for cancer treatment have been identified as one of the two priority areas to be covered in the new broadened appraisal process (the second being medicines used in cardiovascular conditions). The licensed products to be considered by AWMSG will be those not falling under the NICE single technology appraisal (STA) process. Thus doctors, pharmacists and other health professionals in NHS Wales will have adequate access to independent advice on the clinical effectiveness and cost effectiveness of all cancer medicines to receive marketing authorisation after April 2007 (either from NICE or from AWMSG).

The provision of quality assured and evidence-based treatments appropriate to need are part of the vision for improving health in Wales over the next decade. Effective treatments can increase quality of life, as well as prolong life. AWMSG believes that well targeted prescribing delivers health improvement in both acute and chronic disease, and underpins many of the current initiatives to improve the quality of patient care.

AWMSG will therefore continue to advise on a prescribing strategy which ensures that prescribing of inappropriate medicines is minimised, and prescribing of effective medicines is encouraged, since if medicines are not well managed, resources are wasted, and patient care may be compromised.