The Leukaemia Foundation welcomes the Federal Government’s announcement today that the cancer medicine, IMBRUVICA® (ibrutinib) will be added to Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

Mr Bill Petch, CEO at the Leukaemia Foundation said this announcement today is an important step forward for people living with Chronic Lymphocytic Leukaemia (CLL) or Small Lymphocytic Lymphoma (SLL) in whom the disease has progressed despite treatment with standard therapies.

“This listing will save lives. It means that Australians with CLL who have run out of treatment options can access this new oral therapy which is showing remarkable results. We are another step closer to a time when no one will die from this disease”.

He said, “This PBS listing means Australian patients can enter a new era in how CLL is treated.”

Another great benefit of IMBRUVICA® is that it is an oral therapy which means patients won’t need to have intense treatment in a hospital.

“Although it is important to note, patients on this therapy will need extra support in the community so they can make the important lifestyle changes needed to manage this chronic condition.”

Active community support is particularly important to ensure patients understand the importance of diligently taking their treatment so that medication adherence is high and the drug is effective. That is why it is so important that Leukaemia Foundation is able to support these patients through programs like CLL My Way which has been developed with support from Janssen.

“Feedback from patients who access the CLL My Way program reveals that those with active monitoring were seeking more psychosocial support and connection with others than those who had experienced complex chemotherapy and relapsed disease,” Mr Petch said.

CLL is the most common form of leukaemia, with almost 1,500 Australians expected to be diagnosed this year alone.

CLL is a type of cancer of the bone marrow and blood that affects white blood cells, known as lymphocytes. Under normal conditions these cells produce antibodies that help protect against infection. In people with CLL, lymphocytes undergo a cancerous change and become leukaemic cells leaving the body vulnerable to serious and life-threatening infections.

The Leukaemia Foundation congratulates the Australian Government for making IMBRUVICA® available to people living with CLL throughout Australia.

“This announcement is an important step forward in the treatment of blood cancer in Australia,” Mr Petch said.

-ENDS-

For more information about this story, or to request interviews or photos, please contact Susie Howard on 0408 337 843 showard@leukaemia.org.au OR Monique Cerreto on 0478 300 507 mcerreto@leukaemia.org.au
References:


About Chronic Lymphocytic Leukaemia (CLL)

- CLL is the most common form of leukaemia.1
- Almost 80 per cent of new cases are diagnosed in people over 60 years old. It occurs more frequently in men than women and is rarely diagnosed in people less than 40 years of age.1
- The cause of CLL is unknown.1
- Symptoms may not be obvious but may include swollen lymph nodes (glands) in the neck, groin and arms, tiredness, unexplained bruising and unintentional weight loss.1
- Small Lymphocytic Lymphoma (SLL) has many similarities to CLL. However, in SLL, cancer cells proliferate primarily in the lymph nodes, and to a much lesser extent in the blood or bone marrow than in CLL.4

Leukaemia Foundation

Leukaemia, lymphoma and myeloma are all types of blood cancer and they can develop in anyone, of any age, at any time. Another 35 Australians are diagnosed every single day.

The Leukaemia Foundation is the only national charity dedicated to helping Australians with blood cancer survive and then live a better quality of life. The Leukaemia Foundation exists because of the generous and ongoing support of the Australian community. ABN 57 057 493 017.

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