Significant New Breast Cancer Treatment Available in New Zealand

An entirely new form of anti-cancer therapy that works to apply the brakes to cancer cell division and growth can now be prescribed for New Zealand women with a common and incurable type of breast cancer.1

Cancer experts welcome the approval of IBRANCE® (palbociclib) by MEDSAFE to treat an invasive form of breast cancer that has spread to other parts of the body.1

IBRANCE can be used in combination with hormonal therapy* to treat the 60 per cent of women2 with advanced or metastatic breast cancer whose cancer cells are hormone-receptor positive (HR-positive) and human epidermal growth factor receptor 2 negative (HER2-negative).1

Dr Reuben Broom, Medical Oncologist from Auckland explained that this class of therapy represents a significant advance for more than 400 New Zealand women3 who are diagnosed every year with this common type of advanced breast cancer.

He said: “Palbociclib represents a major breakthrough in that it can delay the onset of resistance to hormone (endocrine) therapy by interfering with the cell-cycle of these cancer cells. In trials, the addition of palbociclib to endocrine therapy increases the likelihood of tumour shrinkage and more or less doubles the duration of time to progression (tumour growth) and the consequent need to change therapy”1,4.

“Because palbociclib can delay the need to commence patients on chemotherapy, it allows women to continue living without the disruption often associated with chemotherapy”.

“While most women with early breast cancer are cured of their disease with surgery and post-operative (adjuvant) therapy, there is a small but significant proportion of women whose disease returns. In breast cancer it commonly recurs in a multifocal or widespread pattern so is usually considered incurable”.

“For this most common type of breast cancer, we typically treat their disease with anti-hormonal (endocrine) therapy. The effectiveness of this approach is variable depending on factors such as hormone-sensitivity and prior therapy. The advantage of endocrine therapy is it can be continued as long as it is working and is usually better tolerated then chemotherapy, which often ties patients to a cancer infusion centre. However, resistance to single-agent endocrine therapy inevitably develops and then we typically move patients to chemotherapy.”

Palbociclib is an oral therapy taken daily, for 3 weeks on and one week off in a recurring pattern1.

Palbociclib is generally well tolerated with the most common side effects including a lowering of white blood cell counts (requires monitoring), fatigue and general stomach disturbance (usually mild and manageable)1.

Available in more than 60 countries4 around the world, IBRANCE belongs to a class of medicine known as CDK4/6 inhibitors that acts to disrupt the proliferation of cancer cells.1
Dr Broom explained: “The growth of hormone sensitive breast cancer is dependent on factors called cyclin-dependent kinases 4 and 6 (CDK4 and CDK6), which promote the progression through the cell cycle leading to cell division. This has therefore become a natural and obvious target for a therapy to prevent further growth and development of cancer. Interestingly, it may also help overcome or prevent the development of hormone resistance. Palbociclib is such an agent (inhibitor of CDK4 and CDK6)”.

Dr Broom added: “This welcome news of palbociclib registration will make it somewhat simpler for patients who wish to pursue this approach to access palbociclib. Until now there have only been a handful of patients in New Zealand who have accessed it, and for these patients access has typically been a challenge.”

Ibrance® (palbociclib) is not currently funded and patients will need to pay for this medicine.

About metastatic breast cancer and its treatment

There are several types and sub-types of disease referred to as breast cancer. As such, identifying the specific type of cancer is fundamental to determining appropriate therapy.5,6,7

Treatment options for metastatic breast cancer depend on several factors, including where the cancer has spread to, the level of oestrogen receptors found inside the breast cancer cell, and the level of the HER2 gene or HER2 protein on the surface of cancer cells.5,6,7

Cancers that are hormone-receptor-positive use the hormones oestrogen to grow and spread.5,6,7

When a breast cancer cell has abnormally high levels of the HER2 gene or HER2 protein, it is called HER2-positive. The cancer is HER2-negative when it does not have high levels of the HER2 gene or protein.5,6,7

The majority of patients with metastatic breast cancer have HER2-negative breast cancer. If HER2-negative breast cancer is also oestrogen receptor positive, the most common treatment is hormonal therapy, followed by chemotherapy.5,6,7

About Pfizer New Zealand: Working together for a healthier world™

At Pfizer, we apply science and our global resources to improve health and well being at every stage of life. We strive to set the standard for quality, safety and value in the discovery, development and manufacturing of medicines. Our diversified global health care portfolio includes biologic and small molecule medicines and vaccines, and many of the world’s best-known consumer products.

Every day, Pfizer colleagues work across developed and emerging markets to advance wellness, prevention, treatments and cures that challenge the most feared diseases of our time. Consistent with our responsibility as the world’s leading biopharmaceutical company, we also collaborate with healthcare providers, governments and local communities to support and expand access to reliable, affordable health care around the world.

For more than 150 years, Pfizer has worked in countries around the world to make a difference for all who rely on us. For more information please visit www.pfizer.co.nz
IBRANCE® (palbociclib 75 mg, 100 mg and 125 mg) Capsules

IBRANCE (palbociclib) is an unfunded prescription medicine used to treat HR+, HER2- advanced breast cancer taken in combination with an aromatase inhibitor or fulvestrant.

IBRANCE has risks and benefits. Do not take IBRANCE if you are allergic to palbociclib or any of the other ingredients in IBRANCE capsules. Caution is needed if you are premenopausal or perimenopausal, have or have had abnormal blood test results, problems with your liver or kidneys, are lactose intolerant, are pregnant or planning to become pregnant or are breastfeeding. Tell your doctor if you are taking any other medicines.

Common side effects include infection, abnormal blood test results, tiredness, feeling sick or vomiting, diarrhoea, sore mouth, lips or tongue, hair loss, loss of appetite, nose bleed, skin rash, change in sense of taste, blurred vision, increased tearing or dry eyes, shortness of breath, bleeding or bruising more easily than usual. If symptoms continue or you have side effects, see your doctor, pharmacist or healthcare professional.

Ask your doctor if IBRANCE is right for you. Use strictly as directed.

Contains 75 mg, 100 mg or 125 mg of palbociclib.

You will need to pay for this medicine and normal doctor’s fees apply.

Further information on IBRANCE is available from Medsafe www.medsafe.govt.nz or Pfizer New Zealand Limited, Auckland, www.pfizer.co.nz Ph. 0800 736 363.

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References:

1. IBRANCE Datasheet June 2017


3. www.breastcancer.org.nz/content/metavivors-stories

4. Pfizer Data on file


6. www.breastcancer.org.nz/content/treatment


IBRANCE(R) is a registered trademark. PP-IBR-NZL-0010. NA 9380. Prepared in August 2017

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