



NZIBDNG

New Zealand Inflammatory
Bowel Disease Nurses Group

12th October 2020

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Health
Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160
By email: c.hipkins@ministers.govt.nz

Dear Minister,

I acknowledge your reply of 5 October declining our various requests to you for a meeting to discuss Pharmac's handling of an application to fund ustekinumab.

Your standard reply is not only disappointing, but entirely misses the point of our request, which was not to ask you to intervene in Pharmac's decision about an individual medication. Our request is that you investigate Pharmac's performance and processes, and its ability to function in the best interest of New Zealanders, in this instance, New Zealanders with severe inflammatory bowel disease.

As Minister you are charged with the "review of the performance and operations of Pharmac". Furthermore, the "Minister of Health has a statutory power to review Pharmac's operations and performance, and can require information from it." Most importantly, you are charged with "answering to the public for any problems or controversies arising in connection with Pharmac" (Pharmac Board Governing Manual).

We further note that Pharmac is a Crown Entity that is directly accountable to the Minister of Health. Where else can organisations and individuals with serious concerns about the agency's performance take these concerns?

Over 100 medical professionals have gone on record as having a problem with Pharmac. We have lost confidence in it. We assert that this agency's processes are flawed. This severely impacts the health of New Zealanders. Your Ministry is supposed to "improve, promote and protect the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders".

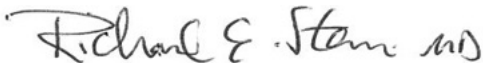
The NZ Society of Gastroenterology, the NZ IBD Nursing Group, and Crohn's & Colitis New Zealand Charitable Trust are formally requesting that you address and investigate our concern that Pharmac's processes in evaluating what medications to fund is fundamentally flawed.

We are also concerned that your reply is curiously out of sync with comments made by the Prime Minister in a recent televised leaders' debate, in which she specifically said, when asked if a Labour-led government would investigate Pharmac's processes, that yes, they would investigate. Is this not now Labour policy?

We note these words of yours, recorded on your electorate website: *“No matter who you are or where you come from, everyone deserves the opportunity to fulfil their potential and live life to the fullest. We all have a responsibility to ensure nobody gets held back because of circumstances beyond their control.”*

Whatever the politics and votes involved, there comes a time when our leaders need to put point-scoring aside and take a stand to do what is right. We hope, in this case, that you will do this.

Regards,



Richard Stein MD, FRACP, FACG, AGAF

Chair, Crohn's & Colitis NZ

chair@crohnsandcolitis.org.nz

027 545 4539



Malcolm Arnold MB, ChB, FRCP, FRACP

President, New Zealand Society of Gastroenterology

Malcolm.Arnold@cdhb.health.nz

027 224 8087



Jacqui Stone NP, MN

Chair, NZIBDNG

jacqui.stone@middlemore.co.nz

021 24 20491

Visit the petition site at www.wecantwait.nz