



MEDIA RELEASE: Wednesday 16th March 2022

Pharmac's decision to fund immunotherapy treatment durvalumab (imfinzi) for stage 3 lung cancer is a small step forward. This funding decision also highlights extreme inequities with access to treatments continue to persist for NZ's Biggest Cancer Killer.

Patient advocacy group, Lung Foundation New Zealand (LFNZ) acknowledges the leaders and clinical advisors at Pharmac and the key people at AstraZeneca for getting durvalumab (imfinzi) across the line.

Says, Philip Hope, Chief Executive, This funding decision will be life changing for stage 3 NSCLC lung cancer patients (approx. 300 per year) who will now have access to durvalumab (imfinzi) from Monday 1st August 2022.

Access to treatment is access to life and all patients diagnosed with Lung Cancer deserve to thrive.

We also acknowledge AstraZeneca for choosing to provide 'compassionate access' to Imfinzi (durvalumab) right through until Pharmac funding begins in August, for all stage 3 non-small cell lung cancer patients that meet the eligibility criteria.

The patients and carers throughout New Zealand we are in contact with, are thrilled and heartened with this news, some have asked, why did it take so long?

Despite many advances in early detection and innovative treatments across the OECD, the Lung Foundation is witnessing unprecedented suffering and inequity in New Zealand, resulting in premature death for most patients diagnosed with lung cancer.

Our courageous patient community are especially mindful, 1300 patients diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer, DO NOT yet have access to immunotherapy treatment which is the standard of care for lung cancer. Plus there are another 300 patients in need of a targeted therapy that is still sitting with Pharmac.

Sadly, NZ's treatment paradigm for lung cancer remains well below international standard. Many treatments readily available in the OECD, continue to sit with Pharmac.

Australia funds 17 treatments for non-small cell lung cancer (80% of lung cancers), yet NZ funds just 5. This goes some way to explain why NZ's survival rates for lung cancer, lag behind Australia and the OECD.

Patients with advanced and metastatic, non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) have been waiting for nearly six years in New Zealand (Feb 2017 - since 1L immunotherapy submission to PHARMAC).

Q. Has Pharmac made a budget request of the health minister that would enable the reimbursement of immunotherapy and targeted therapies for lung cancer?

Q. When will Pharmac (an instrument of government) fund immunotherapy treatment for stage 4, and the number of targeted therapies for stage 4?



Māori and Pacifica patients are more likely to be diagnosed with advanced or metastatic lung cancer, which means they are less likely to benefit from the access to durvalumab (imfinzi).

45% of patients across NZ are diagnosed with lung cancer, following presentation to an emergency department. These patients are more likely to have advanced, incurable disease (stage 4) compared to those diagnosed through clinic.

This statistic tells us primary healthcare in NZ must improve early detection. Doctors MUST investigate symptoms, rather than take a wait and see approach.

The symptoms of lung cancer include, but are not limited to, shortness of breath, chest pains, an unexplained/persistent cough and noisy breathing.

LFNZ is a non-government organisation dedicated to increasing survival for lung cancer.

Access to treatment is access to life and all patients diagnosed with Lung Cancer deserve to thrive.

Ends.

What we want you to know about the burden of lung cancer in Aotearoa

- Cancer is the leading cause of death in New Zealand and lung cancer is the **BIGGEST** cancer killer.
- Lung cancer kills more people in NZ every year, than breast cancer, prostate cancer and melanoma cancer combined.
- Every day 5 people die of lung cancer and a further 6 people are diagnosed with lung cancer.
- More than 1800 kiwis die from lung cancer every year - this is 5 times the national road toll.
- More than 1800 patients **DO NOT** have an effective first line treatment for advanced lung cancer in NZ.
- 30 patients with lung cancer die prematurely every week in NZ, primarily because they cannot get access to a standard of care treatment (a targeted therapy and/or immunotherapy), unless they can self-fund.
- There is a major intersection with other determinants of health, including a quadrupled risk of suicide for lung cancer patients compared to the general population.
- **ANYONE** can get lung cancer!

Lung cancer causes extreme inequity for Maori

- Lung cancer registrations and mortality rates are 4 times higher in Maori women and nearly 3 times higher in Maori men.
- One Maori dies of lung cancer every day in New Zealand.
- Lung cancer is the leading and second highest cause of death in Maori females and males respectively.

Lung cancer screening

Despite, lung cancer being New Zealand's biggest cancer killer, we **DO NOT** yet have a national lung cancer screening programme in place...



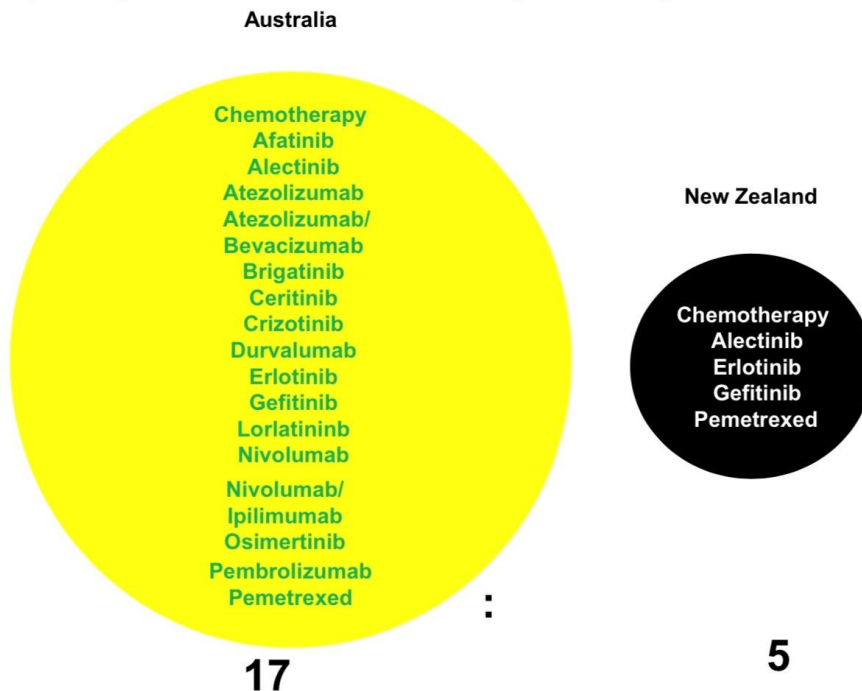
Comparing treatment of Lung Cancer in New Zealand with Australia

The infographic below compares the number of treatments for Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer (NSCLC) in New Zealand, with Australia and Europe (NSCLC = 85% of all lung cancers).

New Zealand funds just five treatments for lung cancer, in comparison to Australia which funds 17 treatments.

This huge imbalance goes some way to explain the 6% gap in three-year survival rate between NZ (2015 - 2017) and Australia (2013 - 2017). This gap is only going to grow.

New Zealand publicly-funded⁴ NSCLC treatment options compared with Australia: as at 28 April 2021



Another sad milestone

Keytruda (pembrolizumab) was funded 5 years ago for melanoma, yet it remains on the waiting list for lung cancer (despite its efficacy being scientifically proven, knowing too, lung cancer mortality rates are FOUR times melanoma). Furthermore, there are 15 other indications for Keytruda (pembrolizumab) that are ALSO sitting with Pharmac.



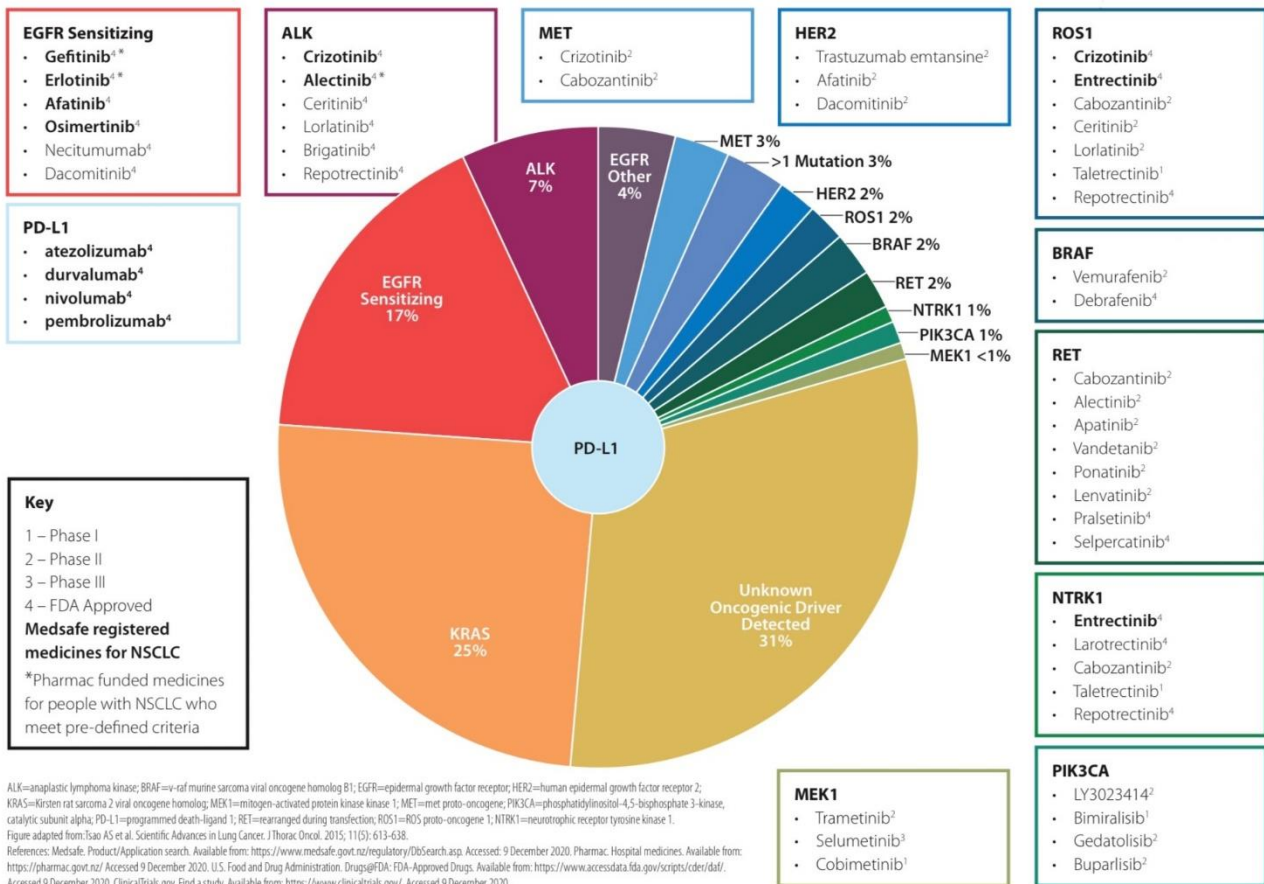
Lung Cancer Biomarkers - per the infographic below

Very few of the known lung cancer biomarkers are tested for in New Zealand, primarily because Pharmac does not fund these treatments. Patients in New Zealand should be tested for all known biomarkers at the time of diagnosis (and informed of the results irrespective of the reimbursement status of treatment options).

The infographic illustrates the many different lung cancer biomarkers for which treatments are available (and just how few are available in New Zealand).

<https://lungfoundation.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ROC00470-Lung-Biomarker-Graphic-7.0-1.pdf>

Biomarkers in patients with non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC)





Who we are -

Lung Foundation New Zealand (LFNZ) is a non-government organisation (patient advocacy group) dedicated to increasing survival for lung cancer.

The Lung Foundation provides information and support for lung cancer patients and carers and is devoted to advocating on a range of issues, including; prevention, early detection (screening), stigma, public access to more effective treatments, an increase in research funding and a commitment to Smokefree 2025.

Our Vision

New Zealanders know how to keep their lungs healthy and they investigate symptoms of lung disease earlier.

Our Mission

To increase survival for lung cancer

Our Goals

- Promote Lung Health
- Promote Early Diagnosis of Lung Disease
- Reduce Lung Cancer Deaths

Our Values

Rangatiratanga; we have integrity, we empower people, we say what we mean.

Manaakitaka, we nurture and respect people's mana.

Whanaungatanga, collaborating to improve healthcare in Aotearoa, also serves future generations.

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi engari he toa takimano

My strength is not that of an individual but that of the collective

For media enquiries

Philip Hope
Chief Executive
Lung Foundation New Zealand
Mobile: 021 959 450
Email: philip.hope@lungfoundation.org.nz

Visit with us online: <https://lungfoundation.org.nz/about-us/>

Connect with us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/LungFoundationNZ/>

Make a gift - Support our fighting fund and help us save lives

<https://givealittle.co.nz/donate/org/lungfoundationnz>