



## Media Release

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# Patient access to new cancer drugs at risk

**Brisbane: New research shows the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) is facing enormous cost pressures from an increasing number of expensive cancer drugs, many of which only marginally increase median survival.**

According to Dr Deme Karikios, from the NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre, University of Sydney, the cost blowout was unlikely to be sustainable and could force a rethink of how drugs are approved in Australia, with the risk that patients might not be able to get certain drugs through the PBS.

Presenting at the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia (COSA) Annual Scientific Meeting, Dr Karikios said PBS expenditure on cancer drugs had increased eight fold and the average price paid by the PBS per prescription had almost quadrupled over a 10-year period.

“The cost to the PBS of chemotherapy and molecularly targeted drugs alone has risen from \$65 million in 2000 to \$508 million in 2010. Dr Karikios said. “The average cost of a newly listed cancer drug is now more than \$5000 a month.”

“We are seeing some drugs approved that extend median survival by only a few months, yet they add hundreds of millions of dollars to health system costs. Many are asking whether that money could be better spent.”

COSA President, Professor Bogda Koczwara, said cancer patients currently had good access to cancer drugs. “However, with growing cost pressures and an increasing number of Australians being diagnosed with cancer, we need to work with the government to ensure the PBS remains viable and we can continue to offer patients effective, affordable treatments.”

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