

17th October, 2013

AstraZeneca Australia recognise the important issue of patient access to effective new oncology treatments, are pleased to have been part of Medicines Australia Oncology Industry Taskforce and are encouraged by the debate that has arisen as a consequence of the group's activities.

Patient access is an issue of significant public interest and concern as highlighted both by responses to the Deloitte Access Economics Access to Cancer Medicines Report and a number of recent stories presented by the Australian lay press.

Two important components to this recent debate have been the issue of how access for Australian cancer patients compares to other countries and the cost of new oncology treatments. It is important to note that Australia's system for evaluating the cost effectiveness of new treatments has historically been held in high regard by others, with aspects of it commented upon and sometimes replicated by other health technology assessors overseas. With this in mind AstraZeneca believe it is important that fair, transparent and appropriate processes are in place to allow the assessment of value and cost effectiveness of new oncology treatments in ways that are fit-for-purpose in the era of personalised medicine.

However, AstraZeneca believe that there are now a number of issues relating to process and the interpretation of evidence that represent ongoing and significant barriers to achieving this, and which have lead to the significant delays in the access to life extending oncology treatments for Australian patients.

While cost and affordability are important, AstraZeneca believe value should remain the most important consideration and that an evaluation framework that is consistent, that recognises the significant ethical challenges in delivering evidence of survival gains^[1] and, perhaps most importantly, that is transparent are pivotal aspects to achieving this.

AstraZeneca looks forward to continuing to work with the Australian government, the clinical community, academia and its industry partners towards this aspiration.

Reference: Lewis, Kerridge, Lipworth, Day; The economic evaluation of personalised oncology medicines: ethical challenges. MJA, October 7th 2013