

[REDACTED]

Ref: H201806917

Dear [REDACTED]

### Response to your request for official information

I refer to your request of 11 October 2018 to the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) for:

*"I hope you might be able to explain why prescriptions done by a specialist are more expensive than those provided by a GP? I was told it was because the MoH funds them differently – which makes no sense to me when they are for the exact same thing? Please consider this an OIA request."*

The decision about which medicines are funded is made by the Pharmaceutical Management Agency (PHARMAC). PHARMAC decides if it will fund all or some of the cost of a medicine. In most cases, the patient contributes to the cost of the medicine, which is referred to as the pharmaceutical co-payment.

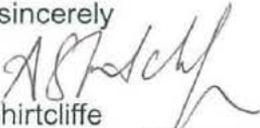
Currently, patients who are eligible for publicly funded health and disability services should, in most circumstances, pay a \$5.00 pharmaceutical co-payment with the rest of the cost of subsidised prescription items met by the government through district health board (DHB) funding. In order for patients to qualify for the \$5.00 co-payment, a prescriber/provider must be an "approved" provider. If a private specialist's prescription is issued in the course of their private practice, they are not considered an "approved" provider.

As you have noted, a higher co-payment of either \$10.00 or \$15.00 applies to medicines prescribed by private specialists. This is because private health services are not covered by District Health Board (DHB) funding. The higher co-payment applies for prescriptions written by "non-approved" providers, with the rest of the medicine still met by the government. The co-payment is linked to the approval status of the provider, rather than the medicine itself.

I trust this information fulfils your request.

Please note this response (with your personal details removed) may be published on the Ministry of Health website.

Yours sincerely

  
Andi Shirtcliffe  
Chief Advisor – Pharmacy  
Office of the Chief Medical Officer