



Psychoactive Substances Expert Advisory Committee

Annual Report for the year ended December 2017

January 2018

Introduction

The Psychoactive Substances Expert Advisory Committee (the Committee) is an expert panel established under section 11 of the Psychoactive Substances Act 2013 (the Act), to advise the Psychoactive Substances Regulatory Authority (the Authority) on technical matters relating to the Act.

Under section 11(11) of the Act, the Committee is required to provide the Minister of Health with a written annual report of its operations. This is our fourth annual report.

Richard Robson

Chair

Psychoactive Substances Expert Advisory
Committee

Chris James

Group Manager, Medsafe

Acting as the Psychoactive Substances
Regulatory Authority under delegation of the
Director-General of Health

Background

The Psychoactive Substances Act 2013

In 2013, the New Zealand Government introduced the Act to regulate the availability of psychoactive substances in New Zealand to protect the health of, and minimise harm to, individuals who use psychoactive substances.

The Authority was set up to ensure all products distributed in New Zealand that contain psychoactive substances pose no more than a low risk of harm as designated through a pre-market approval regime. The psychoactive substances, and their final products, are only able to be imported, manufactured, distributed and sold by people and businesses licensed by the Authority.

A restriction on using trials that involve animal testing to support a product approval application was introduced when the Act was amended in May 2014. Section 12 of the Act states that the Committee is not to have regard to results of trials involving animals –

- (1) In performing the function set out in section 11(2)(a), the advisory committee must not have regard to the results of a trial that involves the use of an animal.
- (2) However, the advisory committee may have regard to the results of a trial undertaken overseas that involves the use of an animal if the advisory committee considers that the trial shows that the psychoactive product would pose more than a low risk of harm to individuals using the product.

The Psychoactive Substances Expert Advisory Committee

The functions of the Committee, as set out in section 11(2) of the Act, are to:

- evaluate, with regard to the results of trials, psychoactive products to assess whether they should be approved for use by individuals
- advise the Authority about whether a psychoactive product should or should not be approved for use by individuals
- increase public awareness of the advisory committee's work in relation to psychoactive substances, for example, by the timely release of papers, reports, and recommendations.

The Committee is an expert panel established to advise the Authority on technical matters relating to the Act. Committee members have a commitment to work for the public of New Zealand and to take account of government policy on psychoactive products. Members are accountable to the Authority. Committee members must collectively have expertise in:

- pharmacology
- toxicology
- neurosciences
- medicines
- any other area the Authority considers relevant.

The Committee may comprise up to six members, including one person to be nominated as the Chair. Committee members are appointed on terms and conditions that the Authority sees fit following consultation with the Minister of Health.

2017 in review

The term of the five member committee appointed in 2013 expired in January 2017. Four members were reappointed and two new members were appointed. The current membership is as follows.

Professor Paul Glue

Head of Department, Department of Psychological Medicine, University of Otago, Dunedin.

Dr Paul Fitzmaurice

Laboratory Manager, Gribbles Veterinary, Palmerston North.

Dr Shanika Perera

Auckland Medical Officer of Health, Auckland District Health Board.

Associate Professor Richard Robson (Chair)

Executive Director, Christchurch Clinical Studies Trust Ltd.

Professor Susan Schenk

School of Psychology, Deputy Dean (Research), Faculties of Science and Engineering, Victoria University of Wellington.

Dr Malcolm Tingle

Associate Professor, Pharmacology, University of Auckland.

There were no applications for psychoactive products in 2017. The Committee did not convene in this year.

The submission on alternatives to animal testing received from Psychoactive Research Limited, entitled *An approach to NPS safety assessments without animal testing*, written by David Nutt, Imperial College London, will be considered in 2018.