



The Royal New Zealand  
College of General Practitioners  
Te Whare Tohu Rata o Aotearoa

17 February 2025

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Tēnā koe,

### **Submission – proposal to fund desogestrel**

The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners (the College) is the largest medical college in Aotearoa New Zealand. Our membership of 6,439 specialist GPs and rural hospital doctors comprises 40 percent of the specialist medical workforce. The Medical Council of New Zealand accredits the College to deliver vocational training to the specialist General Practitioner and Rural Hospital Doctor workforce. We are committed to prioritising the reduction of health inequities experienced by Māori and honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the rights of Māori. To do this we prioritise initiatives that support our members to develop cultural safety capabilities through our Training, Continuing Professional Development and Quality programmes.

Our members provide medical care to patients and their whānau. Each year approximately 23 million patient contacts<sup>i</sup> receive first point of contact care from 1,077 general practice clinical teams who effectively manage 90 percent of health concerns across Aotearoa.

### **Our submission**

The College supports the decision to fund desogestrel. This will help reduce barriers relating to access, choice, and cost for women across Aotearoa.

#### **We note:**

- 14 percent of women report experiencing an unplanned pregnancy.<sup>ii</sup>
- Side-effects experienced from contraception can result in women either changing their medication or cease using contraception completely.
- The “Wāhine Māori and Contraception” report highlights the restrictive times for taking daily contraceptive pills is a barrier for continuing contraceptive medication.<sup>iii</sup>

#### **Benefits of desogestrel:**

- Increased access to contraceptive and reproductive health care to help reduce unplanned pregnancies.<sup>iv</sup>
- Increased choices of medication will benefit women with other reproductive health needs, e.g., menopause, endometriosis
- The increased 12-hour period that desogestrel allows will result in women having more control over their reproductive health.

## Summary

The College supports the funding of desogestrel and advises that its implementation should be accompanied with clear guidance for GPs who switch patients from their current contraceptive medication to desogestrel. GPs and patients will need confidence in the process of changing medications for safe use.

If you require further clarification, please contact Maureen Gillon, Manager Policy, Advocacy, Insights – [Maureen.Gillon@rnzcgp.org.nz](mailto:Maureen.Gillon@rnzcgp.org.nz).

Nāku noa, nā



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- <sup>i</sup> Ministry of Health Data (2023)
  - <sup>ii</sup> Ministry of Health. 2019. Pregnancy Planning: Findings from the 2014/15. New Zealand Health Survey. Wellington: Ministry of Health
  - <sup>iii</sup> Cram, F., Koopu, A., Adcock A., Fox, A., Henry, A., Hermens, J., Makoare, M., Reid, N., Scammell, J., Te Huia, B., Tipene, D., and Were, L. (2024). Wāhine Māori and Contraception – A Collaborative Research Study. A study by Katoa Ltd for Sexual Wellbeing Aotearoa. Auckland: Katoa Ltd.
  - <sup>iv</sup> Tanne JH. Problems with contraception play big part in unplanned pregnancies, study says. BMJ. 2008 May 17;336(7653):1095. doi: 10.1136/bmj.39576.554699.DB. PMID: PMC2386600.