



australasian society of clinical immunology and allergy

15 September 2022

Professor Andrew Wilson
Chair, Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC)
Department of Health and Ageing
GPO Box 9848 Canberra ACT 2601
Email: pbac@health.gov.au

Dear Professor Wilson,

Re: ASCIA statement on the high clinical need to maintain supply of VIT on the PBS

On behalf of the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA) I am writing in support of a submission from Stallergenes Greer to maintain supply of venom immunotherapy (VIT) on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

Supply of VIT on the PBS is vital for people with bee and wasp venom allergy, to prevent life threatening severe allergic reactions (anaphylaxis). Stallergenes Greer is the sole supplier of VIT on the PBS for the treatment of patients at risk of anaphylaxis due to bee and wasp stings in Australia.

ASCIA provided a statement to the PBAC in 2018 that outlined the high clinical need to maintain the supply of VIT on the PBS. We understand that our statement was previously influential in supporting a decision to increase the pricing of these treatments to their current levels, to ensure financial viability and hence patient access to these unique and important life-saving treatments.

The purpose of this statement is to restate and reinforce our previous advice in 2018, to support the high clinical need to maintain listing of VIT on the PBS.

There is a high clinical need for VIT on the PBS for the following reasons:

- Allergies to venoms from stinging insects such as bees, wasps and ants are one of the most common causes of anaphylaxis in Australia. A substantial proportion of fatalities due to anaphylaxis in Australia are caused by insect stings or bites (41 of 324 fatalities in the period 1997-2013), with honeybee stings being the leading cause of insect sting-related fatalities (85%).¹
- Key aims of VIT include reducing the risk of anaphylaxis from venomous insect stings, thereby reducing risk of death or long term sequelae of anaphylaxis and reducing acute medical care due to anaphylaxis.²
- VIT is an essential treatment for a small patient population for whom insect allergy is a life-threatening condition, with the unique potential to act as a long-term preventative treatment.
- There is no therapeutic alternative to VIT, beyond rescue medication for anaphylaxis, and patients are recommended to continue therapy for at least 3 years to ensure long-term protection.

ASCIA members strongly support the need for the PBAC to maintain policies and pricing that can continue to ensure access to unique and important life-saving treatments to patients under their care.

Loss of access to VIT on the PBS would not only prevent new patients from reducing their risks of death and disability, but would also threaten treatment outcomes for patients who have already committed to long-term therapy.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or need further clarification on the high clinical need to support access to VIT to Australian patients, who are at risk of life-threatening anaphylaxis to bee and wasp stings through maintaining listing on the PBS.

Yours Sincerely,

Jill Smith
ASCIA CEO

References:

1. Mullins R et al. Increases in anaphylaxis fatalities in Australia from 1997 to 2013. *Clinical & Experimental Allergy* 2016; 46: 1099–1110
2. Venom Immunotherapy (VIT): A Guide for Clinical Immunology/Allergy Specialists, ASCIA. www.allergy.org.au/hp/papers/ascia-venom-immunology-guide