

Article from Sydney Morning Herald
August 24, 2007 - 11:09AM

Breast cancer drug available at a cost

A new drug designed for women with advanced breast cancer has officially hit the market, but the treatment will soon carry a \$45,000 price tag.

Tykerb has been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) for women with the extremely fast-moving HER2-positive form of breast cancer.

The medication is intended for patients whose cancer has still progressed after treatment with Herceptin, an expensive blockbuster drug which became subsidised last year.

However, Tykerb itself was last week rejected for funding under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) on the grounds of cost effectiveness. Pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline says it is "considering the issues leading to the rejection in evaluating future steps".

Scores of Australian women have already accessed the drug through clinical trials. Making it commercially available, the company said women who met criteria would get it free until November 30.

However, thereafter they would need to pay \$3,900 a month, or \$45,000 for the full year-long course, to get Tykerb.

About 12,000 Australian women are diagnosed with breast cancer each year, with about 25 per cent of them developing the HER2-positive type with fast-growing tumours and a higher likelihood of relapse.

An international study released last year found that Tykerb and the chemotherapy drug Xeloda in combination were effective in women who had failed on Herceptin.

The combination almost doubled the time for disease progression compared to chemotherapy alone, and it also reduced the risk of cancer spreading to the brain.

The therapies have already been approved for use in the US, and overseas analysts have predicted that Tykerb, generically called lapatinib, could eventually record annual global sales of about \$A4.5 billion.

© 2007 [AAP](#)

<http://www.smh.com.au/>

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2007/08/24/1187462486183.html>