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### Parsimonious medicines' budget to blame for Herceptin decision

As long as DHBs and the government continue to subscribe to a parsimonious medicines' budget, needy New Zealanders will continue to be denied treatment they could expect to receive as a matter of course overseas.

The Cancer Society was commenting on the 'potentially tragic and profoundly disappointing' High Court decision in the Herceptin case.

"The court's hands were tied by Pharmac's own internal criteria that, sadly, prevented New Zealanders getting appropriate access to medicines that are regarded as essential overseas," chief executive, Dalton Kelly, said.

"This decision highlights the problems New Zealand cancer sufferers face with the current Pharmac funding and procurement policies.

"This is yet another wake-up call for the government and Peter Dunne to listen to the overwhelming evidence provided by patient groups and clinicians alike that New Zealand needs a medicines strategy.

"This decision seems to indicate that Pharmac obscures the decision-making processes to suit its budget."

The Cancer Society said in its submission on the medicines strategy that, in addition to adequate funding, there must be real transparency in decision-making about all important drugs and innovative treatments.

The cancer community believes that Pharmac ought to have funded Herceptin in this particular circumstance under the Cancer Exceptional Circumstances Scheme, Mr Kelly said.

"Sadly the Cancer Society expects that this will be the first in a series of disappointing and potentially tragic decisions caused by the parsimonious attitude of the DHBs, government and Pharmac regarding funding and access to

modern medicines."

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