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Government's investments in new medicines must include removal of CD4 threshold says NZAF.

Yesterday, the New Zealand Government announced a \$124 million increase in new medicines over the next four years.

New Zealand AIDS Foundation applauds the Government's commitment to investing in medicines, but says it must now lead to the removal of the CD4 threshold for accessing HIV treatment. "We are extremely optimistic now that the CD4 threshold will be lifted. This is one of the recommendations of the PHARMAC's pharmacology technical advisory committee (PTAC) that has waited for implementation for nearly two years," says Shaun Robinson, Executive Director, New Zealand AIDS Foundation. In March this year, the Foundation made this point to the Ministry of Health. In the two years since the recommendation was first made further evidence has emerged to point to the health benefits of removing the CD4 policy and getting people living with HIV on treatment as soon as possible.

"The effect of this change would be improved health and wellbeing for the person with the virus and a reduction in the spread of HIV due to the treatments suppression of viral load. The science is clear on both these points. Due to these effects the policy will pay for itself in a very short space of time," Mr. Robinson adds.

It is encouraging to note that District Health Boards are recognising the cost-savings in the longer term delivered by medications and are adding as much as \$11 million to PHARMAC's annual budget for the next year. "However, all of this investment must bring benefits for people affected by HIV and end the outdated CD4 policy," says Mr. Robinson.

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