BC PharmaCare Newsletter

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In this edition

TI Letter: Celebrating 25 Years of Highlights

In celebration of its 25th anniversary, the Therapeutics Initiative (TI) released a two-part series presenting 25 key conclusions from its last 120 Letters. Part one highlights 13 "clinical pearls" from TI Letters published between 1994—2005 and part two presents the remaining 12 from 2006—2018.

The PharmaCare Newsletter is published by the Pharmaceutical Services Division to provide information to British Columbia's health care providers.

BIOSIMILARS INITIATIVE PHASE TWO LAUNCH

On May 27, 2019, PharmaCare introduced the first phase of its Biosimilars Initiative. Phase two of the Biosimilars Initiative begins on September 5, 2019. In this phase, PharmaCare is changing coverage of infliximab (Remicade®) for adult patients being treated for gastrointestinal (GI) indications (see below table). The change in coverage will reflect a switch from the originator biologic to its biosimilar versions (Inflectra® or Renflexis®), which are just as safe and effective, but less expensive.

Biosimilars Initiative Phase Two: September 5, 2019 – March 5, 2020			
Drug	**Originator**	**Biosimilar**	**Indications Affected**
Infliximab	Remicade®	Inflectra® Renflexis®	Crohn's Disease (adult)* Ulcerative Colitis (adult)*

*Pediatric patients on Remicade will be switched to an infliximab biosimilar. PharmaCare is working closely with B.C. Children's Hospital to accomplish this, and pediatric patients may not be switched on the same timeline as adult patients.

During a six-month transition period (September 5, 2019—March 5, 2020), PharmaCare will provide coverage for all originator and biosimilar brands of infliximab for GI patients, allowing time for patients to inform themselves, discuss the change with their prescriber, and initiate the switch process. Effective March 6, 2020, PharmaCare will no longer cover Remicade, without an exceptional coverage request. For patients who are unable to switch for medical reasons, their prescriber may submit a Special Authority (SA) request for exceptional coverage of the originator drug, clearly identifying the medical reason. Exceptional requests are reviewed by SA on a case-by-case basis.

For more information on the Biosimilars Initiative, visit the PharmaCare website at www.gov.bc.ca/biosimilars/pharmacy.

BIOSIMILARS PHASE TWO: PHARMACIST ROLE

As an important part of front-line patient care, pharmacists are integral to the ongoing success of the Biosimilars Initiative. Pharmacists frequently interact with patients first, and thus are well-positioned to identify affected GI patients and inform them about biosimilar switching. Patients value pharmacists as a source of information and having an advance conversation on biosimilars can help prepare the patient for a discussion with their prescriber. (Note that a pharmacist may not adapt a prescription for an originator drug to its biosimilar version.)

In recognition of the additional effort by pharmacists to identify and inform affected patients, PharmaCare is offering a GI Biosimilar Patient Support Fee for pharmacists. The Support Fee is a $15 per patient fee that can be submitted as a **PIN (66128199)** in PharmaNet and will be paid in accordance with the usual monthly payment schedule. Resources for pharmacists and patients are available on the PharmaCare biosimilars websites: www.gov.bc.ca/biosimilars and www.gov.bc.ca/biosimilars/pharmacy.

The GI Support Fee is a separate fee (and PIN) as the Support Fee offered in Phase One, and will be active for claims during the Phase Two switch period (September 5, 2019—March 5, 2020). The fee can be claimed only for eligible patients: those with an active Special Authority for infliximab and using Remicade for Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis at the start of the switch period.

CHANGES TO LIMITED COVERAGE CRITERIA FOR BIOSIMILARS PHASE TWO

The Limited Coverage Criteria and/or indications for infliximab has been updated as part of Phase Two of the Biosimilars Initiative:

EFFECTIVE DATE	September 5, 2019 for GI patients; May 27, 2019 for other listed indications	
DRUG	**DIN(S)**	**INDICATION/CRITERIA CHANGE**
infliximab (Inflectra®)	02419475	Rheumatoid arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, psoriatic arthritis, plaque psoriasis, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis
infliximab (Renflexis®)	02470373	Rheumatoid arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, psoriatic arthritis, plaque psoriasis, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis