Ministry of Health
Drug Plan and Extended Benefits
2nd Floor, 3475 Albert Street
Regina, Canada S4S 6X6

October 20, 2022

To: College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan
College of Registered Nurses of Saskatchewan
Pharmacy Association of Saskatchewan
Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy Professionals
Saskatchewan Health Authority
Saskatchewan Medical Association

RE: Saskatchewan Biosimilars Initiative Announcement

Dear Health Care Providers:

Today, the Ministry of Health launched a Saskatchewan Biosimilars Initiative. Saskatchewan will be the seventh Canadian public drug plan to implement a comprehensive biosimilars drug coverage policy to increase the use of more cost-effective biosimilar drugs. A news release has been issued to provide notice to government stakeholders and the public: https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2022/october/20/saskatchewan-launches-biosimilars-initiative.

The Biosimilars Initiative includes ten drugs listed on the Saskatchewan Formulary (see Appendix A for details). The policy will also apply to future reference biologics as new biosimilars are launched and listed on the Saskatchewan Formulary.

Established patients already receiving a reference biologic drug (or "originator" biologic) with an available biosimilar version will be required to use a biosimilar version **by April 30, 2023**, in order to maintain coverage under the Saskatchewan Drug Plan.

During the transition period from now until April 30, 2023, established patients will have access to Saskatchewan Drug Plan coverage of both the reference biologic and the biosimilar options listed on the Formulary. After April 30, 2023, coverage of the reference biologic will no longer be provided.

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Exemptions for a patient to maintain coverage of a reference biologic will be considered for those who cannot use a biosimilar for a medical reason. Prescribers will be able to submit a request, along with clinical rationale, for review by the Drug Plan on a case-by-case basis. An application form will be available on our biosimilars webpage soon (linked below).

This policy will apply to individuals who receive Saskatchewan Drug Plan coverage of their reference biologic medication. Please note that patients will continue to be able to access Saskatchewan Drug Plan coverage of their reference biologic medication if a suitable biosimilar format is not available.

All biosimilars approved by Health Canada meet rigorous quality standards to confirm they are as effective and safe as the reference biologic. Patients or providers should not expect a difference in therapeutic effect whether a patient receives a reference biologic or a biosimilar version.

Where applicable, patients who use the affected reference biologics will have Exception Drug Status (EDS) coverage proactively added for the biosimilars by early November. You will not need to submit an EDS application for your patient to start using a biosimilar. Impacted patients who may need to start using a biosimilar version of their medication will be notified of this coverage update with a letter in early November. Health care providers can also confirm their patient's EDS coverage on their Pharmaceutical Information Program (PIP) Profile.

Patients place significant trust in their health care provider's advice and opinions. Your patients may be anxious or concerned about using a biosimilar version of their medication. We ask that physicians, nurses, and pharmacists, approach patient questions with evidence-based information to help build patient confidence in the robust data supporting biosimilar use and transition. Clinical resources will be available on our webpage (linked below).

Generic prescription medicines have long played an important part in helping to control prescription drug costs. In 2021, generic medicines saved Canada more than $33 billion[1]. Lower-cost biosimilars offer a similar opportunity for health system savings while maintaining patient access to high-quality and life-saving treatment.

"Biosimilars are high-quality drugs that are as effective and safe as the reference biologic but are available at a much lower cost. Having successfully gone through the transition process with patients in B.C. starting in 2019, patients and providers should feel confident about the transitioning to biosimilars in Saskatchewan." ***Dr. John Esdaile, Scientific Director Emeritus, Arthritis Research Canada***

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The Saskatchewan Drug Plan recognizes the considerations and impacts of this policy will be different for each stakeholder. We also recognize the challenges facing health care delivery at this particular time. We remain committed to understanding and responding to the needs and concerns of health care providers and patients by engaging about how best to support this policy throughout the weeks and months ahead.

Additional information and resources on biosimilars and the Saskatchewan Biosimilars Initiative are available for patients and health care providers on our new webpage (to be launched shortly): https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/health/prescription-drug-plans-and-health-coverage/extended-benefits-and-drug-plan/biosimilars.

Please do not hesitate to contact us to ask questions about this biosimilars coverage policy. We can be reached at sk.biosimilars@health.gov.sk.ca, or you can leave a voicemail at 1-800-667-2549 (306-787-8744 in Regina), option #3 (this will become available starting the week of October 24, 2022).

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[1] Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association. (n.d.). [PDF]. *The Value of Generic Medicines*. Retrieved October 19, 2022, from https://canadiangenerics.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2022_ValueOf_Generics_English_Final.pdf.

Appendix A: List of Drugs Included in the Saskatchewan Biosimilars Initiative (as of October 20, 2022)

Drug name	Reference biologic brand name	Biosimilar brand name	Health conditions
Adalimumab	Humira®	Abrilada® Amgevita™ Hadlima® Hulio® Hyrimoz® Idacio® Simlandi™ Yuflyma™	Auto-immune conditions, including: Ankylosing spondylitis Crohn's disease Hidradenitis suppurativa Juvenile idiopathic arthritis Plaque psoriasis Psoriatic arthritis Rheumatoid arthritis Ulcerative colitis Uveitis
Etanercept	Enbrel®	Brenzys® Erelzi®	Auto-immune conditions, including: Ankylosing spondylitis Juvenile idiopathic arthritis Plaque psoriasis Psoriatic arthritis Rheumatoid arthritis
Enoxaparin	Lovenox®	Inclunox® Noromby® Redesca™	Prevention and treatment of venous thromboembolic events
Filgrastim	Neupogen®	Grastofil® Nivestym™	Low white blood cell count (non-cancer)
Glatiramer (a non-biologic complex drug)	Copaxone®	Glatect™	Multiple sclerosis
Infliximab	Remicade®	Avsola™ Inflectra® Renflexis™	Auto-immune conditions, including: Ankylosing spondylitis Crohn’s disease Plaque psoriasis Psoriatic arthritis Rheumatoid arthritis Ulcerative colitis
Insulin aspart	NovoRapid®	Trurapi®	Diabetes
Insulin glargine	Lantus®	Basaglar™	Diabetes
Insulin lispro	Humalog®	Admelog®	Diabetes
Rituximab	Rituxan®	Riximyo® Ruxience™ Truxima™	Auto-immune conditions