Biosimilars Canada
The Voice of Biosimilar Medicines in Canada

For Immediate Release

Nova Scotia Becomes Fifth Province to Implement Biosimilar Switching Initiative

Toronto – February 4, 2022 – Biosimilars Canada, a national association representing Canada's biosimilar medicines industry, today welcomed the announcement by the Government of Nova Scotia that it will implement a "switching" or transitioning policy to expand the use of biosimilar medicines under its public drug programs.

"Biosimilars Canada congratulates the Government of the Nova Scotia and Health Minister Michelle Thompson on implementing a biosimilar switching policy to improve the sustainability of the Nova Scotia Pharmacare Programs and health system," said Jim Keon, President of Biosimilars Canada.

This is an important milestone as half of Canada's provinces have now announced biosimilar switching policies. The Nova Scotia announcement follows British Columbia (May 2019), Alberta (December 2019), New Brunswick (April 2021) and Quebec (July 2021). A sixth jurisdiction – the Northwest Territories – announced a biosimilar switching policy in December 2021.

"As half of Canada's provinces have recognized, implementing biosimilar switching policies is key to ensuring the sustainability of drug programs and making the most effective use of limited public funds," said Keon. "I encourage other provinces to follow the lead of Nova Scotia and other jurisdictions in moving forward with biosimilar switching policies without delay."

Patients covered by the Nova Scotia Pharmacare Programs who use certain biologic drugs to treat such diseases as arthritis, diabetes, inflammatory bowel disease and psoriasis will switch to a biosimilar version of the medicine within the next 12 months. This evidence-informed strategy will optimize public resources to ensure the best value for treatments, improve access to medications for patients and contribute to the sustainability of the public drug plans.

Switching from an originator biologic drug to a biosimilar is a safe and effective practice. Health Canada confirms that "*patients and health care providers can have confidence that biosimilars are effective and safe for each of their authorized indications, and that no differences are expected in efficacy and safety following a change in routine use between a biosimilar and its reference biologic drug in an authorized indication*."[1]

Biologic medicines have revolutionized the treatment of many disabling and life-threatening diseases. They can, however, cost $10,000 to $25,000 or more to treat a patient for a year, which is placing an enormous financial strain on drug budgets. The province says switching to biosimilars where they are available will save an estimated $13 million annually once fully implemented. Additional savings are expected as more biosimilars become available in Canada.

"Biosimilars Canada and its member companies look forward to working with the Government of Nova Scotia to ensure the successful implementation of its biosimilars switching policy," added Keon.

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[1] Health Canada, *Biosimilar biologic drugs in Canada: Fact Sheet*.

The full benefits of biosimilars cannot be realized unless drug plans adopt policies that support their expanded use with the implementation of successful biosimilar transitioning or "switching" policy. Under these policies patients who use a biologic drug to treat a chronic condition are transitioned or "switched" from an original biologic drug to a biosimilar biologic drug under the supervision of their treating physician.

There is extensive real-world experience with biosimilars in Canada, with more than 761,000 retail prescriptions filled annually, according to market data from IQVIA. Biosimilars are also used extensively in the hospital and oncology markets. There have also been more than 178 clinical trials worldwide involving approximately 21,000 switched patients, which confirm that switching from an originator biologic drug to a biosimilar biologic drug is not associated with any major efficacy, safety, or immunogenicity issues.[2]

Full details of the Nova Scotia biosimilars initiative are available at: https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20220204002.

About Biosimilars Canada
Biosimilars Canada is a national association representing the biosimilar medicines industry in Canada. Our member companies are at the forefront of the global development and marketing of biosimilar medicines. Biosimilars Canada provides leadership in educating Canadian stakeholders about the safety and efficacy of biosimilar medicines, and advocates for policies that support their timely approval, reimbursement, market acceptance and expanded use. Biosimilars Canada is a division of the Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association. Visit us at www.biosimilarscanada.ca.

About Biosimilar Medicines[3]
A biosimilar biologic drug, or biosimilar, is a drug demonstrated to be highly similar to a biologic drug that was already authorized for sale. Health Canada evaluates all the information provided to confirm that the biosimilar and the reference biologic drug are similar and that there are no clinically meaningful differences in safety and efficacy between them. Health Canada's rigorous standards for authorization mean that you can have the same confidence in the quality, safety and efficacy of a biosimilar as any other biologic drug.

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[2] Barbier, L. et. al. *The Efficacy, Safety, and Immunogenicity of Switching Between Reference Biopharmaceuticals and Biosimilars: A Systematic Review*, March 31, 2020.
[5] Health Canada, *Biosimilar biologic drugs in Canada: Fact Sheet*