

BC PharmaCare Expands Use of Biosimilar Medicines First Province to Implement Large-Scale Biologic Switching Program

Toronto, May 27, 2019 – Biosimilars Canada, a national association representing Canada's biosimilar medicines industry, today congratulated the Government of British Columbia for announcing a program in which patients taking originator biologic drugs will be "switched" or transitioned by their clinicians to a biosimilar biologic drug within a six-month period.

Biologic medicines have revolutionized the treatment and prevention of many disabling and life-threatening diseases over the past 50 years, but they are also very expensive and are a significant driver of increasing prescription drug costs. Just 1.7 per cent of Canadian prescriptions were filled with biologic drugs in 2018, yet the cost of these prescriptions represented 29.9 per cent of Canada's total prescription drug costs that year.

Public and employer-sponsored benefit plans want to provide patients with access to innovative new medicines. Biosimilar medicines present an important way to manage costs while also supporting positive patient outcomes.

"Biosimilar medicines have an important role in supporting health care sustainability and patient care, and Biosimilars Canada congratulates the Government of British Columbia for its Canadian and North American leadership in promoting and expanding the use of biosimilar medicines," said Michel Robidoux, Chair of Biosimilars Canada and President and General Manager of Sandoz Canada.

While the use of biosimilar medicines has been well-established in Europe with more than 700 million patient days of use over the past decade, the uptake of these medicines in Canada for chronic treatments has been much slower as public and private payers have not actively implemented policy levers to support their use beyond naïve or new patients. Canadian payers are now beginning to recognize that enhanced policies are needed to fully realize the value of biosimilar medicines.

"Switching or transitioning patients from original biologic treatments to their corresponding biosimilar medicines is the responsible choice for those who manage drug budgets, and will help to ensure patient access to essential treatments for years to come," said Jim Keon, President of Biosimilars Canada.

The evidence supporting such a policy is clear. By the end of 2017 there were 90 studies involving the "switching" or transitioning of 14,255 unique patients that provide real world evidence confirming the safety and efficacy of this practice. The BC PharmaCare announcement is also consistent with Health Canada's recommendation that such a decision should be made by the treating physician in consultation with the patient and taking into account available clinical evidence and any policies of the relevant jurisdiction.

Full details of the BC biosimilars initiative are available at:
<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2019HLTH0080-001072>

About Biosimilar Medicines

A biosimilar biologic drug, or biosimilar, is a drug demonstrated to be highly similar to a biologic drug that was already authorized for sale.¹ 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.² Health Canada's rigorous standards for authorization mean that patients and health care providers can have the same confidence in the quality, safety and efficacy of a biosimilar as any other biologic drug.³

About Biosimilars Canada

Biosimilars Canada is a national association representing the biosimilar medicines industry in Canada. Its member companies are at the forefront of the global development and marketing of biosimilar medicines. Biosimilar medicines are approved by Health Canada as being as safe and efficacious as their reference biologic drugs, and are developed to the same quality standards. Biosimilar medicines present a significant opportunity to embrace cutting-edge therapies while addressing the cost-effectiveness demands on healthcare systems in Canada. Biosimilars Canada is a division of the Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association. Visit us at www.biosimilarscanada.ca.

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¹ Health Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/biologics-radiopharmaceuticals-genetic-therapies/applications-submissions/guidance-documents/fact-sheet-biosimilars.html>

² Ibid

³ Ibid.