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NEW LOCAL NEWS

Last updated at 3:03 PM on 13/01/09

P.E.I. ranks dead last in arthritis support

LATEST NEWS

The Guardian has received the following press release: CHARLOTTETOWN, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND--(Marketwire - Jan. 13, 2009) - Prince Edward Island is providing the worst arthritis medication coverage in Canada, according to Arthritis Consumer Experts, a national grassroots arthritis organization tracking provincial government performance on arthritis care.

"Prince Edward Island ranks dead last in the country in terms of public coverage for gold-standard arthritis medications," said Cheryl Koehn, President of Arthritis Consumer Experts. "People in PEI who need these medications to prevent catastrophic joint damage and disability are being forced to wait and watch their own bodies becoming more and more disabled."

Arthritis Consumer Experts tracks medication listings for a particular class of arthritis drug called biologic response modifiers, and provides the results in the JointHealth(TM) report card on provincial formulary listings for biologic response modifiers. Since the first report card was released in October 2007, PEI has consistently ranked below all other provinces and territories in terms of reimbursement coverage for biologic response modifiers.

Biologic response modifiers work by attacking or blocking the molecules that cause inflammation in people with inflammatory arthritis, and are considered the "gold standard" in treatment for people with moderate to severe disease. Prince Edward Island provides very limited reimbursement coverage for this class of medications in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis, and no coverage at all for the treatment of ankylosing spondylitis (inflammatory arthritis attacking the spine) or psoriatic arthritis (inflammatory arthritis attacking joints, skin, and finger nails).

Koehn noted that biologics in PEI have been "under review" for up to five years. "The PEI government has promised, year after year, that decisions on these files are imminent," she said. "After five years of waiting, people with inflammatory arthritis deserve an answer, and they deserve to receive the same quality of care as people living with inflammatory arthritis in other parts of the country."

These arthritis medications are listed on many public formularies in provinces across the country. Quebec, Saskatchewan, and BC provide reimbursement for all biologics approved to treat rheumatoid arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, and psoriatic arthritis. In Atlantic Canada, all other maritime provinces provide a range of biologic options for each of these three disease-types. Only people in Prince Edward Island are left almost totally without help.

"Why are Prince Edward Islanders with inflammatory arthritis receiving a significantly lower standard of care than all other Canadians?" Koehn asked. "People in PEI with inflammatory arthritis are suffering, and government is doing nothing to help them."

About ACE

Arthritis Consumer Experts (ACE) is a national organization that provides research-based joint health information and education to Canadians with arthritis, and monitors the performance of provincial health care delivery to those living with the disease. Through its JointHealth(TM) series of programs, the organization helps to empower people living with all forms of arthritis to take control of their disease and to take action in health care and research decision making. ACE is led by people with arthritis and its activities are guided by a strict set of guiding principles, and by an advisory board comprised of leading scientists, medical professionals and informed arthritis activists.

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13/01/09

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Yes - students and staff need the programs and support only offered at larger schools

No - Programs don't improve education; personal one-on-one contact plus high expectations for students is better than fancy curriculum and extracurricular offerings.

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