



August 15, 2007

Hon. George Abbott
Minister of Health
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC
V8V 1X4

**sent via email to:
Hlth.health@gov.bc.ca
original mailed**

Dear Minister Abbott:

In an effort to work collaboratively with government, Arthritis Consumer Experts, the Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance and The Arthritis Society BC and Yukon division are writing to bring your attention to the June 27, 2007 Common Drug Review's **Canadian Expert Drug Advisory Committee (CEDAC) recommendation that abatacept (Orencia®), in combination with a disease modifying anti-rheumatic drug (DMARD), be added to provincial drug benefit plans for people with severely active rheumatoid arthritis who have failed on an anti-tumour necrosis factor ("anti-TNF") therapy. (See attached CEDAC recommendation.)**

As noted in our letter of December 18, 2007, abatacept's mechanism of action is entirely new in comparison to other biologic response modifiers currently listed on the province's drug benefit list. This new medication works by interfering with T-cells which promote inflammation, making them inactive and unable to cause the hallmark outcomes of rheumatoid arthritis – joint destruction and long term disability. This new medication is an important one to include on the drug benefit plan as the research is conclusive that numerous different molecules – like in HIV/AIDS and cancer – cause and promote the disease. And just like in HIV/AIDS, it is a cocktail of medication treatments that help as much as possible to restore the normal immune function of the person living with rheumatoid arthritis. No two people living with rheumatoid arthritis respond to the same cocktail of medications.

For the above reasons, and in light of the CEDAC recommendation and your strong support for the Common Drug Review process, we urge you, as Minister of Health, **to take the immediate necessary steps to list abatacept on the provincial drug benefit plan.** We remind you that this therapy is intended to treat British Columbians with moderate to severe rheumatoid arthritis who did not respond to an anti-TNF therapy. At present, abatacept is one of the only remaining treatment options for these individuals. Providing a timely reimbursement listing for this medication will ensure that British Columbians living with rheumatoid arthritis have the same quality of care and treatment options that people living with cancer and HIV/AIDS have in this province.

We thank you in advance for considering our request, and await word from you on BC PharmaCare's listing decision for abatacept.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Koehn
President, Arthritis Consumer Experts
Person with rheumatoid arthritis



Ron Woznow, PhD
Executive Director, The Arthritis
Society, BC and Yukon Division



Colleen Maloney
BC Steering Committee Representative
Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance
Person with rheumatoid arthritis

Encl.

C.c. Bob Nakagawa, Assistant Deputy Minister

**Note: Please address reply correspondence to all signatories above to:
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