

March 19, 2012

SENT BY EMAIL AND MAIL:

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Minister of Health
Ministry of Health
Room 337, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC
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Dear Hon. de Jong:

On behalf of the contributors to the **Leveling the Field in Canada – Moving Toward Reimbursement Equality in Biologic Therapy for Canadians with Rheumatoid Arthritis** paper released in May 2010, we are writing to thank you for responding to the recommendations contained in that document by improving access to rheumatoid arthritis biologics for people with this disease in British Columbia.

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a debilitating autoimmune disease that most often affects people in the prime of their lives (20–50 years of age), but can manifest at any age.¹ It is the most severe form of progressive arthritis and occurs in between 400,000 and 600,000 Canadian adults.² RA progressively erodes the synovial joints and surrounding tissues and if left untreated, causes irreversible joint damage, chronic pain and lost function, resulting in profound losses in quality of life (home, social, work) and a decreased life expectancy.³

You will recall that the primary objective of the paper was twofold:

1. To provide rationale to allow specialist physicians to prescribe the biologic therapy most suited for an individual RA patient whenever it is recognized that the particular biologic would provide the best possible outcome for the patient.
2. To highlight to government decision-makers in this country the lack of equitable access and patient/physician choice in treating RA with the biologics.

As we prepare to update the **Leveling the Field in Canada** paper in 2012, we look forward to continuing to work with the Government of British Columbia to ensure further progress on the original recommendations noted above.

Once again, thank you for your ongoing commitment to improving the lives of people living with RA.

Sincerely,



Cheryl L. Koehn
President, Arthritis Consumer Experts

Sincerely,



Jason Kur, MD, FRCPC
President, BC Society of
Rheumatologists

¹ Leveling the Field in Canada – Moving Toward Reimbursement Equality in Biologic Therapy for Canadians with Rheumatoid Arthritis (May, 2010), pg. 8.

² Ibid., pg. 5.

³ Ibid., pg. 8.

cc: Mr. Bob Nakagawa, Assistant Deputy Minister, Pharmaceutical Services
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