



March 2, 2009

Hon. Karen Casey
Department of Health
4th floor, Joseph Howe Building
1690 Hollis Street
PO Box 488
Halifax, NS
B3J 2R8

Re: Inclusion of infliximab (Remicade®) on provincial drug plan for the treatment of psoriatic arthritis

Dear Minister:

I am writing today to communicate the disappointment and concern shared by members of the arthritis community regarding your recent decision to decline to list infliximab (Remicade®) on the Nova Scotia medication formulary for the treatment of psoriatic arthritis.

Psoriatic arthritis is a disease causing progressive—sometimes catastrophic—joint damage. This listing decision will almost certainly result in permanent, irreversible joint damage and disability for some citizens.

While other biologic medications are included on your province's public formulary for the treatment of psoriatic arthritis, without the inclusion of infliximab a significant gap in care exists for patients with the disease. As biologics are almost always administered as part of a medication "cocktail", it is critically important to give physicians access to the full arsenal of biologics and allow them to make the right medication decisions for their patients.

Research indicates that infliximab may in some circumstances be the best medication to treat certain patients with psoriatic arthritis. For example, infliximab has demonstrated in randomized placebo-controlled trials to have a significant impact on the extra-articular manifestations of enthesitis and dactylitis. These are important features in psoriatic arthritis and contribute to morbidity in this disease. These were not assessed in etanercept clinical trials, and did not reach statistical significance in adalimumab clinical trials. **This means that infliximab may be the best treatment option for a patient with enthesitis and/or dactylitis.**

I have attached for your review a document summarizing the current research around infliximab for the treatment of psoriatic arthritis. As I am sure you will note, infliximab is a vital component of a rheumatologist's treatment arsenal, and offers several very specific medical benefits for the treatment of psoriatic arthritis in patients with certain manifestations of the disease.

On behalf of people in Nova Scotia living with psoriatic arthritis, I urge you to reverse this decision and list this medication on your public medication formulary immediately.

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions or wish to discuss this issue further, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Koehn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "C" being particularly prominent.

Cheryl Koehn
President, Arthritis Consumer Experts
Person with rheumatoid arthritis

Encl.