

August 15, 2007

Hon. Dave Hancock
Legislature Office
#204 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB
T5K 2B6

sent via email to:
dave.hancock@assembly.ab.ca
original mailed

Dear Minister Hancock:

Thank you for your April 25, 2007 letter responding to our request on March 20, 2007, for Alberta Health and Wellness to expedite its review and listing of rituximab (Rituxan®) for the treatment of moderate to severe rheumatoid arthritis.

You noted in your letter of April 25, 2007, that the Common Drug Review process was valued by Alberta Health and Wellness and vitally important to timely decision-making. Yet, three months have passed and we note rituximab is still not listed on Alberta's government sponsored drug benefit plan, despite having received a "recommend to list" review by the Common Drug Review (see attached document) on February 14, 2007. We ask again that your department take immediate action to list rituximab on the Alberta drug benefit plan.

We remind you that this therapy is intended to treat Albertans with moderate to severe rheumatoid arthritis with an inadequate response to an anti-TNF agent, the current "state-of-the-art" class of treatments. Rituximab is an important medication to include on the drug reimbursement formulary as the research is conclusive that numerous different molecules – like in HIV/AIDS and cancer – cause and promote the disease. 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 one person living with rheumatoid arthritis responds to the same cocktail of medications as the next.

For these reasons, and on behalf of its community members living with rheumatoid arthritis, Arthritis Consumer Experts and the Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance make this second request to immediately list rituximab on the Alberta drug benefit plan. *This will have little to no impact on the existing Alberta Health and Wellness budget as rituximab is less expensive than biologic response modifiers currently listed and patients cannot be treated with two biologic response modifiers at the same time.*

We continue to await word from you on Alberta's listing decision for rituximab.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Koehn
President, Arthritis Consumer Experts
Person with rheumatoid arthritis

Anne Dooley
President, Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance
Person with rheumatoid arthritis

Encl.

C.c. Glen Monteith, Directory Pharmaceutical Policy and Programs Branch

Note: Please address reply correspondence to Ms. Cheryl Koehn, Arthritis Consumer Experts, 910 B Richards Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 3C1.