



March 20, 2007

Honourable Michael Murphy
Carleton Place
P. O. Box 5100
Fredericton, NB
E3B 5G8

Sent via email to:
hw_sme@gnb.ca
Original mailed

Dear Minister Murphy:

Thank you for responding to our December 18, 2006 letter in which we requested the New Brunswick Prescription Drug Program expedite its review of the drugs abatacept (Orencia®) and rituximab (Rituxan®) for the treatment of moderate to severe rheumatoid arthritis.

In an effort to work with government and keep you informed of emerging/new effective medications deemed important by our community in the treatment of arthritis, we write today to bring your attention to the February 14, 2007 Canadian Expert Drug Advisory Committee's (CEDAC) recommendation that rituximab be added (with special criteria) to Provincial formulary drug reimbursement lists.

In light of your comments on the value of the Common Drug Review process to the New Brunswick Prescription Drug Program decision-making, we again ask that your department take the necessary steps to list rituximab on the drug reimbursement list in an expedited fashion. We remind you that this therapy is intended to treat citizens of New Brunswick with moderate to severe rheumatoid arthritis with an inadequate response to an anti-TNF agent. At present, no effective treatment options are available for these individuals. Delays in making this treatment available will increase the probability of unnecessary negative physical, emotional, and social consequences.

Arthritis Consumer Experts and the Canadian Arthritis Patient make this request on behalf of its community members affected by rheumatoid arthritis.

We thank you in advance for considering our request, and await word from you on the Ontario Drug Benefit listing decision for rituximab.

Sincerely,



Linda Wilhelm
NB Steering Committee Representative
Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance
Person with rheumatoid arthritis



Cheryl Koehn
President, Arthritis Consumer Experts
Person with rheumatoid arthritis

C.c. Leanne Jardine, Acting Director, New Brunswick Prescription Drug Program

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