

August 15, 2007

Honourable Ross Wiseman
Confederation Building
4th fl, West Block
P.O. Box 8700
St. John's, NL
A1B 4J6

Sent via email to:
rosswiseman@gov.nl.ca
original mailed

Dear Minister Wiseman:

We wrote to you on March 20, 2007 asking your government to expedite its review and listing of rituximab (Rituxan®) for the treatment of moderate to severe rheumatoid arthritis in light of the positive recommendation issued by the Common Drug Review (CDR). To date, we have had no response from your office.

In your original letter of February 6, 2007, it was stated that the Common Drug Review process was valued by the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program and vitally important to timely decision-making. Yet, five months have passed and we note rituximab has still not been listed on Newfoundland and Labrador's 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 Newfoundland and Labrador drug benefit plan.

We remind you that this therapy is intended to treat citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador 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 Newfoundland and Labrador drug benefit plan. *This will have little to no impact on the existing Newfoundland and Labrador drug 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 your 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

Encls.

C.c. Colleen Janes, Director, Pharmaceutical Services

Note: Please address reply correspondence to Ms. Cheryl Koehn, Arthritis Consumer Experts, 910 B Richards Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 3C1, or to Anne Dooley, 206 Garrison Crescent, Saskatoon, SK., S7H 2Z8. Thank you.