

August 15, 2007

Honourable Chester Gillan
Department of Health
16 Garfield Street
Second Floor
PO Box 2000,
Charlottetown, PEI
C1A 7N8

Sent via email to:
jcgillan@gov.pe.ca
Original mailed

Dear Minister Gillan:

Thank you for your April 16, 2007 letter responding to our request on March 20, 2007, for the Prince Edward Island drug program to expedite its review and listing of rituximab (Rituxan®) for the treatment of moderate to severe rheumatoid arthritis.

In light of your support for the Common Drug Review process and its' value for the Prince Edward Island drug program decision-making, we are disappointed by the delay in listing rituximab on the provincial drug plan. Three months have passed and we note rituximab has still not been added to the Prince Edward Island'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 Prince Edward Island drug benefit plan.

We remind you that this therapy is intended to treat citizens of Prince Edward Island 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 Prince Edward Island drug benefit plan. *This will have little to no impact on the existing Prince Edward Island 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 Prince Edward Island's listing decision for rituximab.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Koehn
President
Person with rheumatoid arthritis



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



Colleen Murray
PEI Steering Committee Representative
Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance
Person with rheumatoid arthritis

Encl.

C.c. Patrick Crawford, pharmacy consultant

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