

July 30, 2012

Sent via email: minhlt@leg.gov.mb.ca

Hon. Theresa Oswald
Minister of Health
#302 Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB
R3C 0V8

Re: Inclusion of biologics for the treatment of the four most common forms of inflammatory arthritis

Dear Minister Oswald,

Arthritis Consumer Experts ranks publicly funded medication formularies based on the number of medically necessary arthritis medications they list out of a possible nine, for four of the most common types of inflammatory arthritis.

I am writing to you today to inform you that Manitoba falls far behind other provinces in its coverage of biologics for all four of the indications on our JointHealth™ **Report Card on provincial formulary reimbursement listings for biologic response modifiers.**

Manitoba is in eleventh place, followed only by the Yukon.

Biologic medications that are currently not listed, and the disease type they treat, include:

- * abatacept (Orencia®) for juvenile idiopathic arthritis
- * certolizumab pegol (Cimzia®) for rheumatoid arthritis
- * etanercept (Enbrel®) for juvenile idiopathic arthritis
- * golimumab (Simponi®) for ankylosing spondylitis
- * golimumab (Simponi®) for psoriatic arthritis
- * golimumab (Simponi®) for rheumatoid arthritis

While other biologic medications are included on your province's public formulary for rheumatoid arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, and psoriatic arthritis, without the inclusion of more options there exists a significant gap in care for patients with these diseases.

For those living with juvenile idiopathic arthritis, the options are fewer, since neither of the typically prescribed medications for the disease are covered under Manitoba's Exception Drug Status (EDS) Program.

Delays in making these treatments available for those living with arthritis in your province will increase the probability of them suffering unnecessary negative physical, emotional, and social consequences. Left untreated, these diseases cause irreversible damage, chronic pain, and a loss of mobility, all of which result in a profoundly reduced quality of life and decreased life expectancy. Since each person living with these diseases responds differently to the available medications, no single biologic therapy is effective in everyone with a specific form of arthritis. The addition of more biologics means more treatment options are available, and that improves the chances of finding the right one for an individual.

Arthritis Consumer Experts makes this request on behalf of its community members affected by these four types of inflammatory arthritis.

We thank you for considering our request, and await word from you on listing decisions for all the medications for the indications listed above.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cheryl Koehn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Cheryl" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Koehn".

Cheryl Koehn
President, Arthritis Consumer Experts
Person with rheumatoid arthritis

cc: Ms. Lisa Leong, A/Manager, Pharmacare, Provincial Drug Programs, Manitoba Health