



September 6, 2019

Dear Premier,

As patients, we do not understand why governments would be willing to put patient well-being at risk by forcing them to switch from their current biologic medicine, which is working well, to a biosimilar with unknown consequences. Even if the evidence says that there is no significant difference, on average, for the sample of patients studied, the same clinical trials invariable show that there are differences for some individuals. Moreover, we do not have enough recorded data to be able to predict which individuals will experience negative effects and which will not.

The reason provided for forcing a switch is that clinicians and patients will not switch unless they are required to do so; therefore, drug plans have to totally withdraw the original biologic. Isn't this evidence enough that patients and clinicians do not want to change from drugs when they are working well?

The rationale for introducing biosimilars is that the government drug plan will save money. This is not necessarily true, since the original biologic manufacturers have all stepped up to offer the same pricing. The drug plans say they want to "create a market" for biosimilars. But the market will exist if the drugs work well and are competitively priced. What patients DON'T want is a situation of competitive bidding, where we are at risk for having to switch products on a regular basis as lower priced alternatives are introduced. Nor do we want to risk a situation, which has happened with generic (chemical) drugs, whereby prices drop so low that companies cannot afford to manufacture them, so companies exit, and we end up with drug shortages and no alternatives or back-up suppliers.

Attached please find a summary of research that we have conducted over the past four years with a broad patient community regarding their perceptions about biosimilars and forced switching. Regardless of their disease, patients who are stabilized on a biologic medicine, do NOT want to switch. More than 90% say they want to have a say in the choice of medicine. Moreover, as we know, patients who are unhappy or worried about the medicines they are taking will be less than totally adherent. Then the medicines will have limited benefit, or even cause harm. We urge you to listen to the patients.

As responsible agents for the public good, you have the opportunity to support patients AND to have lowest cost medicines.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Durhane Wong-Rieger". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Durhane Wong-Rieger, PhD
Chair, Consumer Advocare Network