Pharmacy Benefact
A BULLETIN FOR PHARMACY SERVICE PROVIDERS FROM ALBERTA BLUE CROSS

Number **854** • **April 2020**

Alberta Biosimilar Initiative—update to switching timelines in response to COVID-19

Effective December 12, 2019, the Alberta government, under the Alberta Biosimilar Initiative, changed the funding of select biologic medications for adult patients on Alberta government-sponsored drug plans (refer to Benefact 826 issued December 2019 for more information).

Please note the switching requirement of the Biosimilar Initiative is postponed from July 1, 2020 until January 15, 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

At this time, pharmacists may provide the following information based on individual patient circumstances:

- If a patient has begun taking a biosimilar medication, please advise them to continue taking the biosimilar.
- If a patient has a new prescription for a biosimilar but has not yet started the new medication, please advise them to continue working with the patient support program or pharmacy to start the biosimilar.
- If a patient has a new prescription for a biosimilar administered intravenously (IV), please advise them to contact the patient support program to arrange their infusion. If a patient has an appointment scheduled with an infusion clinic, please advise them to attend the appointment as scheduled or as otherwise instructed by the clinic.
- If a patient has not yet switched to a biosimilar medication, but has scheduled an appointment with their physician, please advise the patient to continue taking the originator biologic medication until meeting with their physician. Patients should attend their appointment as scheduled or as otherwise instructed by their physician.
- If the patient has not yet been contacted by their physician about switching to an originator biosimilar, please advise them to continue taking the originator biologic drug. Patients are advised to contact their physician once the demand for COVID-19 related care has decreased.

Additional resources may be found at **www.ab.bluecross.ca/providers/pharmacy-resources.php** including a Healthcare Professionals Guide.

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Temporary access to Humira for Crohn's Disease due to COVID-19

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Alberta Health is making a temporary change to the Special Authorization criteria for Humira (adalimumab) for Moderately to Severely Active Crohn's Disease on the *Alberta Drug Benefit List*. Effective immediately, Humira is eligible for new patients who are actively flaring but have not met the requirement of having trialed tier 1 biologics, Entyvio (vedolizumab), Inflectra (infliximab), and Renflexis (infliximab). This change recognizes the need for a subcutaneous treatment option to allow for home isolation and to reduce the burden on infusion centres while social distancing measures are in place.

Please note: This temporary change is being granted for the Moderately to Severely Active Crohn's Disease indication for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic only and will not be reflected on the *ADBL*. All other initiation criteria for new patients still apply.

When you have questions:

For assistance with benefit or claim inquiries, please contact an Alberta Blue Cross Pharmacy Services Provider Relations contact centre representative at:

780-498-8370 (Edmonton and area) • **403-294-4041** (Calgary and area) • **1-800-361-9632** (toll free)

FAX 780-498-8406 (Edmonton and area) • **FAX 1-877-305-9911** (toll free)

Alberta Blue Cross offers online access to current Pharmacy Benefacts and supplemental claiming information to assist with the submission of your direct bill drug claims. **Visit ab.bluecross.ca/providers/pharmacy-home.php**

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