PHARMACY **BENEFACT**

Number 956 • April 2021

A BULLETIN FOR PHARMACY SERVICE PROVIDERS FROM ALBERTA BLUE CROSS®

Adalimumab added to the Alberta Biosimilar Initiative

On December 12, 2019, the Alberta government introduced the Alberta Biosimilar Initiative (refer to Benefact 826, December 2019.) This communication is to inform you that as of May 1, 2021, five new adalimumab biosimilar drugs, Amgevita, Hadlima, Hulio, Hyrimoz and Idacio will be listed on the *Alberta Drug Benefit List (ADBL)* for the treatment of ankylosing spondylitis, hidradenitis suppurativa, Crohn's disease, plaque psoriasis, polyarticular juvenile idiopathic arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and ulcerative colitis and will be subject to the Alberta Biosimilar Initiative.

Switching to a biosimilar

Effective May 1, 2021, all new special authorization requests for adalimumab will be assessed with a biosimilar. Adult patients currently taking the originator biologic drug, Humira, for ankylosing spondylitis, hidradenitis suppurativa, Crohn's disease, plaque psoriasis, psoriatic arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and ulcerative colitis will be required to switch to the biosimilar version by May 1, 2022, to maintain coverage for this molecule through their Alberta government-sponsored drug plan.

Health-care professionals play a vital role in switching to a biosimilar by serving as a trusted source of information, coordinating care and managing patient expectations. A patient information handout to support these interactions is available on the Alberta Blue Cross website at **ab.bluecross.ca/pdfs/Patient-Info-Biosimilars.pdf.**

Exceptions

Please note, if one of these exceptions apply to your patients, they will continue to be eligible for Humira.

- Pregnant patients: a Biosimilar Initiative Exception Request form must be submitted. Requests for Humira may be submitted by pharmacists with additional prescribing authorization. Alberta Blue Cross will only consider approval based on pregnancy and approval will be granted until six months past the delivery due date. Those that are trying to conceive will not be approved.
- Pediatric patients: existing Humira pediatric patients (under the age of 18 years) are exempt from switching. No application is required.
- Those who have been approved for a biologic exception through special authorization due to a medical reason. If there is a medical reason why a patient cannot switch to the biosimilar, the prescriber can submit a request for exceptional coverage to Alberta Blue Cross. Requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

For the most current special authorization criteria, please visit the Interactive Drug Benefit List at **idbl.ab.bluecross. ca/idbl/load.do** and search the drug name. Please visit **Alberta Health** online at **alberta.ca/biosimilar-drugs.aspx** for a current list of biologics, their biosimilar equivalents and specific indications affected by this policy. As a reminder, supporting materials for patients and health-care providers regarding the Alberta Biosimilar Initiative are available on the Alberta Blue Cross website at **ab.bluecross.ca/pdfs/Biosimilars-Resources-for-Patients.pdf**.

Product added to Opioid Agonist Therapy (OAT) Gap Coverage Program

As of April 1, 2021 Odan-Methadone (Unflavoured) 10 mg/ml Oral Solution (DIN 02495880) has been added to the OAT Gap Coverage Program. For more information on the OAT Gap Coverage Program see benefact 852.

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**

ALBERTA BLUE CROSS®

®*The Blue Cross symbol and name are registered marks of the Canadian Association of Blue Cross Plans, an association of independent Blue Cross plans. Licensed to ABC Benefits Corporation for use in operating the Alberta Blue Cross Plan. ®† Blue Shield is a registered trade-mark of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association. ABC 82320.956 2021/04