Ministry of Health
Drug Plan and Extended Benefits
2nd Floor, 3475 Albert Street
Regina, Canada S4S 6X6

April 6, 2023

Dear Health Care Providers:

RE: APRIL 30, 2023 – End of Saskatchewan Biosimilars Initiative Transition Period

The Saskatchewan Biosimilars Initiative was announced on October 20, 2022. If your patient is receiving one of the nine currently affected reference biologic drugs, they must transition to a biosimilar version in order to maintain coverage of this treatment under the Saskatchewan Drug Plan after April 30, 2023.

After April 30, 2023, nine reference biologics will no longer be eligible for coverage under the Saskatchewan Drug Plan. This means patients will be responsible for the full cost of a prescription for these reference biologics starting May 1, 2023:

Humira (adalimumab)	**Enbrel** (etanercept)	**Lovenox** (enoxaparin)
Neupogen (filgrastim)	**Copaxone** (glatiramer acetate)	**Remicade** (infliximab)
NovoRapid (insulin aspart)	**Lantus** (insulin glargine)	**Rituxan** (rituximab)

Biosimilar options are listed on www.saskatchewan.ca/biosimilars and https://formulary.drugplan.ehealthsask.ca/SearchFormulary.

We encourage you to prepare patients to transition to biosimilars prior to the transition deadline to ensure there is sufficient time to address patient concerns, update the patient's prescription with the chosen biosimilar, and support the patient's enrollment in the biosimilar patient support program (if applicable).

IMPORTANT EXCEPTIONS: Coverage will continue to be available in the cases below until further notice. These patients will be notified if/when there is a change to their coverage.	
Individual Patient Exemptions	Patients who receive approval for an exemption from the Saskatchewan Biosimilars Initiative policy will continue to receive coverage of their reference biologic for an approved time period. Details are communicated directly to the prescriber and patient.

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IMPORTANT EXCEPTIONS (continued):	
HUMALOG	The transition for **HUMALOG** is paused, until supply of the biosimilar (**ADMELOG**) has stabilized and demand can be met. The Drug Plan will be issuing communication and notification to patients and prescribers as more information becomes available.
Insulin Pump Users	Coverage of **NOVORAPID** and **HUMALOG** will continue to be available for patients who use vials for an insulin pump while the biosimilars undergo insulin pump certification, even if biosimilar(s) in a vial format are available.
Vials for NOVORAPID and LANTUS	These vials will remain covered until biosimilar(s) in a vial format are listed on the Saskatchewan Formulary. However, patients may transition to another available biosimilar format (cartridge or pre-filled pen) if they wish.

Safety Reminder – Preventing Medication Errors:

- As with any medication change, there is a risk that a patient may inadvertently experience a medication error when transitioning to a biosimilar.
- **All health care providers can support safety when transitioning to biosimilars:**
  - Review the patient's medication history prior to starting a biosimilar.
  - Ensure the biosimilar is prescribed with the same dosing regimen as the reference biologic.
  - Confirm when the patient received their last dose of reference biologic to ensure they maintain their prescribed dosing schedule with the biosimilar.
  - Counsel the patient that the biosimilar **replaces** the reference biologic.
- **Work with the patient to prevent duplication of therapy:**
  - Wait until the reference biologic supply is used up before dispensing the biosimilar;
  - Have patients return unused reference biologic medication to the pharmacy for disposal when the biosimilar is started; or
  - Clearly instruct patients to stop using and safely store the reference biologic away from their biosimilar, until it can be safely returned to the pharmacy for disposal.

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Reminders and Tools:

- Patients with current Exception Drug Status (EDS) coverage for an affected reference biologic should already have EDS coverage for the listed biosimilars, where applicable.
- Patients were notified by a Saskatchewan Drug Plan letter of this policy and their updated biosimilar drug coverage, where possible.
- Prescriptions must clearly indicate the biosimilar brand to be dispensed by the pharmacy.
    - *Biosimilars are not listed as interchangeable with the reference biologic on the Saskatchewan Formulary.*
    - Biosimilar options are listed on www.saskatchewan.ca/biosimilars and https://formulary.drugplan.ehealthsask.ca/SearchFormulary.
- A Patient List Request Form and Exemption Request Form are available on our webpage under *Prescriber Forms:* www.saskatchewan.ca/biosimilars.
- Pharmacists can support patients to transition to a lower-cost biosimilar insulin without a prescription from a primary care or specialist prescriber. Pharmacists may be eligible to claim a Biosimilar Insulin Transition Fee (BITF) when supporting the initial transition to a biosimilar insulin. More information is available on our webpage under *Resources and Studies*: www.saskatchewan.ca/biosimilars.

Questions and Support:

For support with the Saskatchewan Biosimilars Initiative policy and drug coverage:

- Visit www.saskatchewan.ca/biosimilars.
- Contact the Biosimilars Initiative team directly at sk.biosimilars@health.gov.sk.ca or 1-800-667-2549 (306-787-8744 in Regina), option #3.

For clinical support from medSask:

- Health care providers can contact medSask pharmacists directly at druginfo@usask.ca or 1-800-667-3425 (306-966-6340 in Saskatoon), or visit medsask.usask.ca/professional-practice/biosimilars-in-Saskatchewan.
- Patients can contact medSask pharmacists directly at med.sask@usask.ca or 1-800-665-3784 (306-966-6378 in Saskatoon), or visit medsask.usask.ca/general-public/biosimilars-in-saskatchewan.