Alberta's biosimilars policy: another significant step towards improving patient access to safe, effective, and high-quality medicines in Canada [1]

Global Impact [2]

Alberta's biosimilars policy: another significant step towards improving patient access to safe, effective, and high-quality medicines in Canada

- *The province's biosimilars policy could contribute to important healthcare savings*
- *Sandoz Canada is committed to providing support to patients, their healthcare professionals, as well as the Government of Alberta in the implementation of this initiative*
- *Savings from biosimilars are only a fraction of their potential despite their growing availability. Biosimilar adoption in Canada has one of the lowest rates of use at 8%*[1]

BOUCHERVILLE, December 12, 2019 – Sandoz Canada today welcomes Alberta Health's switch policy announcement [3] on biosimilars.

Under the new biosimilars policy [4], coverage of certain reference biologic medicines will be discontinued. Coverage will instead be provided for the biosimilar version of the reference biologic medicine. This version of the medicine is more cost-effective than the original and can contribute to important cost savings for the Alberta healthcare system.

A biosimilar may enter the Canadian market after the expiry of the reference biologic's patents and data protection. After this period, Health Canada authorizes the sale of biosimilars, which have no expected clinically meaningful differences in efficacy and safety compared to their reference medicines. For more information on the safety and efficacy of biosimilars and how they compare to their respective reference biologics, please read Health Canada's factsheet on biosimilars here [5][2].

Based on research from the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board, Canadian savings from biosimilars are currently only a fraction of their potential despite growing availability of the medicines[3]. In fact, Canada has one of the lowest rates for biosimilar use at 8% - compared to 50-95% in other countries[1].

The second province to implement a policy of this kind in Canada after British Columbia announced its Biosimilars Initiative in May 2019, with today's announcement, Alberta makes a concrete step towards greater healthcare savings for the province. The wider adoption of biosimilar medicines will also provide more patients access to critical biologic medicines and the support they need, while opening opportunities to expand and improve access to new treatments for all patients across the province.

"Biosimilar switch policies are an important step towards increasing patient access to high-quality, life-enhancing biosimilar medicines and realizing significant health system cost savings for the province," said Michel Robidoux, President and General Manager, Sandoz Canada. "We are encouraged to see another province take a step to improve adoption of biosimilars in Canada. We urge other provinces across Canada to follow Alberta and British Columbia's lead to create more sustainable healthcare systems."

"We are reassured by the announced transition timeline of six (6) months by Alberta Health. We recognize patients will need support and reassurance, and that a proper transition period to a biosimilar requires the necessary investment of time from healthcare professionals. Sandoz is fully committed to supporting patients and their healthcare team through this transition and beyond with education programs, and through our experienced, full-service patient support programs," added Mr. Robidoux.

Biologic medicines are improving the lives of many patients in Canada. However, while reference biologics medicines account for less than 2% of prescribed drugs in Canada, the costs associated with them represent nearly 30% of national drug costs[4]. Biosimilar medicines can increase access to effective treatments for patients, as well as reduce the ongoing economic burden on the Canadian healthcare system that is affecting patients, physicians and payers. The Patented Medicine Pricing Review Board has estimated that private and public drug plans across Canada could save from $332 million CDN to $1.81 billion CDN in the third year following biosimilar entry across a portfolio of products[5].

Sandoz is a pioneer and leader in the biosimilar industry based on its global experience and capabilities in the development, manufacturing and commercialization of biosimilars since 1996. Sandoz launched the first biosimilar in Europe in 2006 and in the Canadian market in 2009.

About Sandoz Canada

Sandoz Canada is part of Sandoz International GmbH, a global leader in generic pharmaceuticals and biosimilars and a pioneer in the emerging field of prescription digital therapeutics, and a division of Swiss multinational Novartis AG. A leader in its field, Sandoz Canada markets and distributes a broad line of generic, biosimilar and specialty products.

www.sandoz.ca [6]

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Links
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[2] https://www.sandoz.ca/en/stories/global-impact
[3] https://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=67300D37177B0-CFD0-440F-CCBA177C758B8061
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