Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Department of Health and Community Services
Pharmaceutical Services Division

March 27, 2023

Dear Health Professional:

We are writing to inform you of a change regarding coverage of biologic medications under the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program (NLPDP).

NLPDP is pleased to introduce the **NLPDP Biosimilars Initiative.** Under the NLPDP Biosimilars Initiative, beneficiaries currently using **Copaxone, Enbrel, Humalog, Humira, Lantus, Lovenox, NovoRapid, Remicade** and **Rituxan,** will be required to transition to a safe and effective biosimilar version no later than March 31, 2024, in order to maintain drug plan coverage.

Health Canada has developed a robust, science-based regulatory framework for the authorization of biosimilars. This framework requires a biosimilar manufacturer to submit substantial evidence to demonstrate that the biosimilar is safe, effective and expected to produce the same clinical outcomes as its originator biologic. Biosimilar transition policies have been successfully implemented in a number of provinces and territories, including British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec, Northwest Territories, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan. The NLPDP Biosimilars Initiative provides an opportunity for NLPDP to manage program expenditures, without negatively affecting patient health outcomes. Savings will be reinvested to fund new drug therapies and/or increase access to current therapies.

Under the NLPDP Biosimilars Initiative, approximately 90% of impacted individuals are diabetes patients who will transition to biosimilar insulins. To reduce demands on other primary care providers, community pharmacists may facilitate and complete the transition to insulin biosimilars. It is expected that some patients may reach out to their prescriber to discuss this transition and request a new prescription. The majority of the individuals who will be transitioning to **non-insulin** biosimilars, are using biologics that are prescribed by specialists, with a small number prescribed by other physicians and nurse practitioners.

A 12-month transition period will allow time to transition to a biosimilar product by March 31, 2024. This 12-month period should eliminate the need for a separate appointment for the majority of impacted patients. Effective **April 1, 2024**, prescriptions will no longer be reimbursed for the originator biologics.

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Biologic Medications Included in the NLPDP Biosimilars Initiative:

Biologic*	Originator Biologic*	Funded Biosimilar(s)*
Non-insulin Biologics		
adalimumab	Humira	Abrilada, Amgevita, Hadlima, Hulio, Hyrimoz, Idacio, Simlandi, Yuflyma
enoxaparin	Lovenox	Inclunox, Noromby, Redesca, Elonox
etanercept	Enbrel	Brenzys, Erelzi
glatiramer	Copaxone	Glatect
infliximab	Remicade	Avsola, Inflectra, Renflexis
rituximab	Rituxan	Riximyo, Ruxience, Truxima
Insulin		
Insulin aspart	NovoRapid	Kirsty, Trurapi
Insulin glargine	Lantus	Basaglar, Semglee
Insulin lispro	Humalog	Admelog

*As the first biosimilar(s) come to market for an originator biologic after the launch of this initiative, a 12-month transition period will apply. At the end of the 12-month transition period, funding and/or special authorizations for the originator biologic will end.

The NLPDP Biosimilars webpage (**www.gov.nl.ca/hcs/prescription/biosimilars/**), contains useful resources for physicians and other health professionals to support patients through this transition period. In addition to an overview of the policy, health professionals will be able to access FAQs; a printable clinic poster; a printable patient pamphlet; clinical resources; and contact information for biosimilar patient support programs.

Each beneficiary will receive a letter from NLPDP explaining the new policy, as well as a patient information pamphlet. As trusted sources of health information, it is likely that patients will seek your expertise to address concerns they may have regarding the transition process and to receive reassurance that the biosimilar they will be using is safe and effective. As always, we appreciate your continued support in providing valuable advice to your patients and working with us to ensure a smooth transition to biosimilars.

If you have any questions or concerns related to the Biosimilars Initiative, please feel free to contact a pharmacist within the Pharmaceutical Services Division at 1-888-222-0533 or 709-729-6507.

Sincerely,
Pharmaceutical Services Division,
Department of Health and Community Services