

Patient information

Infliximab – Biosimilar - Switching

Gastroenterology and Hepatology

Introduction

You are currently being treated with a medicine called infliximab. On your next infusion appointment we are planning to switch your treatment from one brand of infliximab to another brand of infliximab. This leaflet contains information about this.

What is a biosimilar?

Anti-TNF (Anti – Tumour Necrosis Factor) drugs are a type of drug called a “biologic” medication. One of the anti-TNF drugs, infliximab, has only been available under the brand name Remicade[®] for several years. The patent for this drug has now run out. When the patent for a drug runs out, other pharmaceutical companies can make their own copy of the drug.

Simple medicines, like paracetamol, are relatively simple to produce and the resulting copies are known as “generic” medicines. A copy of a biologic medicine is called a “biosimilar”. This means the medicine produced will be similar to the original biologic. Due to the complexity of these drugs, the biosimilars will not be completely identical to the parent drug, Remicade[®]. In fact, due to changes in manufacturing processes over the years, the Remicade[®] in use today, it is not necessarily completely identical to the Remicade[®] that was in use several years ago.

Why are we switching?

There are now “biosimilar” versions of Remicade[®] available in the UK. There are several biosimilar versions of infliximab available to the NHS at a much lower price than Remicade[®]. You may be currently receiving either the originator infliximab Remicade[®] or a biosimilar version. We need to ensure we use NHS resources efficiently, so we will be switching patients to the most cost efficient biosimilar version.

Is biosimilar infliximab safe and effective?

Biosimilar infliximab has been thoroughly tested and analysed. The authorities that regulate medicines in the UK have said the biosimilar version is just as safe and effective as Remicade[®]. The medical team looking after your care are also confident that it is just as safe and effective as your current treatment. Other hospitals in the country have already successfully switched their patients from the originator to a biosimilar or switched between biosimilar infliximab versions without reporting any problems.

What does this mean to me?

The biosimilar we are switching you to will contain the same active product, infliximab. You will continue to receive the same amount of infliximab at the same time intervals. The treatment for your condition remains unchanged; we will monitor your disease activity as normal but do not have plans to have any additional monitoring in place.

What if I experience problems after switching to biosimilar infliximab?

We do not expect any patients to experience any problems as a result of switching. However, if after the switch you do experience problems then you can discuss this with your specialist nurse or specialist doctor.

What if I have further questions?

If you have further concerns about the switch you can contact the specialist nurses or the nurses at the daycase unit where you are receiving your infusion.

This leaflet is not a substitute for any advice your doctor, nurse or pharmacist may give you.

Glossary

- **Tumour Necrosis Factor** – a family of proteins that helps in the signalling of the inflammatory response
- **Biologic medicine** – a pharmaceutical medicine made from or extracted from biological sources. e.g. from a cell line

Further Information

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