March 1, 2015

Triple Therapy Now Acceptable as EAP Criterion for Biologics

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to inform you that the Executive Officer of the Ontario Public Drug Programs has approved a revision to the reimbursement criteria for biologic drugs (i.e., Cimzia, Enbrel, Humira, Kineret, Simponi, Orencia, Remicade, Rituxan and Actemra) funded under the Exceptional Access Program (EAP) for rheumatoid arthritis (RA), to allow failure to triple disease modifying anti-rheumatic drug (DMARD) therapy, defined as methotrexate (20mg/ week), sulfasalazine (2 GM/day) and hydroxychloroquine (400mg/day - dose based by weight up to 400mg per day) for at least 3 months as an acceptable DMARD trail to access EAP funded biologic drugs. In cases where the patient could not receive an adequate trial of triple DMARD therapy with methotrexate, sulfasalazine and hydroxychloroquine due to intolerance, then **the regular DMARD trial criteria must be met**.

This change to the reimbursement criteria is supported by clinical evidence, treatment guidelines and the physician community. It addresses the issues clinicians face when a DMARD therapy may not be an appropriate for some patients and supports and acknowledges a more cost effective option to biologics, which may be just as efficacious. I know this change will improve patient care for all Ontarians affected by RA. We continue to enjoy our collaboration with the with the Exceptional Access Program.

Dr. Arthur Karasik for ORA EAP Committee: Dr. Arthur Karasik, Dr. Carter Thorne, Dr. Jane Purvis, Dr. Deborah Levy, Dr. Angela Montgomery, Mr. Dennis Morrice