

January 2, 2008

Honourable Don McMorris
Minister of Health
Room 302,
Legislative Building
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4S 0B3

Dear Minister McMorris:

Thank you for your letter of December 17, 2007. We are very encouraged that you are reviewing the previous government's decision to decline adalimumab (Humira[®]), etanercept (Enbrel[®]) and infliximab (Remicade[®]) for people living with ankylosing spondylitis in Saskatchewan as scientific evidence supports the use of these medications for this disease.

The inclusion of the three biologic medications approved by Health Canada for the treatment of ankylosing spondylitis are central to improving and maintaining the health of people living with this disease in Saskatchewan¹. As clearly outlined in the CEDAC recommendation, adalimumab not only "resulted in significantly more patients achieving ASAS 20, 50 and 70 after 12 weeks of treatment" but also improved quality of life, reduced disease activity and was shown to be cost effective. Therefore, in addition to the personal health benefits that emerge from appropriate and timely treatment, there are important social, political, and economic benefits for government. It is important to recognize that the economic impact of not providing these medications is far greater than the cost of providing them. For example, the consequences of un-treated or under-treated ankylosing spondylitis, such as spinal rigidity, increased risk of fractures and other joint and internal organ problems, are irreversible and result in higher use of health services and work disability².

¹Rudwaleit et al. *Arthritis and Rheumatism*, 2007; vol.56, #9 (supp): S871; van der Heijde, *Arthritis and Rheumatism*, 2007; vol.56, #9 (supp): S252; Keat et al. *Rheumatology*, 2005; 44:939-947; Boonen et al. *Arthritis Rheum* 2006;65:201–8.

² Kobelt et al. *Rheumatology* 2004;43:1158–66.; Keat et al. *Rheumatology*, 2005; 44:939-947; Boonen et al. *Arthritis Rheum* 2006;65:201–8.

Given the strong scientific evidence, we urge you **to address this situation as soon as possible as citizens of Saskatchewan have been waiting for coverage for this class of medications for years.** Providing a timely reimbursement listing for this medication will ensure that citizens of this province living with ankylosing spondylitis are able to reduce the pain and disability associated with delayed treatment, improve their quality of life and have the same care and treatment options that people have in other Canadian provinces.

Thank you in advance for addressing our concerns. We await word from you on the listing decision for these medications.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Koehn
President, Arthritis Consumer Experts
Person with rheumatoid arthritis



Anne Dooley
President, SK Steering Committee Representative
Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance
Person with rheumatoid arthritis

C.c. Executive Director, Drug Plan and Extended Benefits Branch

Note: Please address reply correspondence to Ms. Cheryl Koehn, Arthritis Consumer Experts, 910 B Richards Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 3C1; or, Anne Dooley, 206 Garrison Crescent, Saskatoon, SK. S7H 2Z8