

March 20, 2007

John Stinson  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
2032 – 300 Carlton  
Winnipeg, MB  
Canada R3B 3M9

**Sent via email to:**  
**John.Stinson@gov.mb.ca**  
**Original mailed**

Dear John Stinson:

Thank you for responding to our December 18, 2006 letter to Minister of Health, Theresa Oswald in which we requested the Manitoba Drug Standards and Therapeutics Committee expedite its review of the drugs abatacept (Orencia®) and rituximab (Rituxan®) for the treatment of moderate to severe rheumatoid arthritis.

In an effort to work with government and keep you informed of emerging/new effective medications deemed important by our community in the treatment of arthritis, we write today to bring your attention to the February 14, 2007 Canadian Expert Drug Advisory Committee's (CEDAC) recommendation that rituximab be added (with special criteria) to Provincial formulary drug reimbursement lists.

In light of your comments on the value of the Common Drug Review process to Manitoba drug formulary decision-making, we again ask that your department take the necessary steps to list rituximab on the drug reimbursement list in an expedited fashion. We remind you that this therapy is intended to treat Manitobans with moderate to severe rheumatoid arthritis with an inadequate response to an anti-TNF agent. At present, no effective treatment options are available for these individuals. Delays in making this treatment available will increase the probability of unnecessary negative physical, emotional, and social consequences.

Arthritis Consumer Experts and the Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance make this request on behalf of its community members affected by rheumatoid arthritis.

We thank you in advance for considering our request, and await word from you on the Alberta Health and Wellness Expert Committee on Drug Evaluation and Therapeutics listing decision for rituximab.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Koehn  
President, Arthritis Consumer Experts  
Person with rheumatoid arthritis



Anne Dooley  
President, Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance  
Person with rheumatoid arthritis



Corrie Billedeau  
MN Steering Committee Representative  
Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance  
Person with rheumatoid arthritis

C.c. Hon. Theresa Oswald, Minister of Health

**Note: Please address reply correspondence to Ms. Cheryl Koehn, Arthritis Consumer Experts, 910 B Richards Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 3C1.**