

March 20, 2007

Susan Paetkau  
Director, Drug Programs Branch  
3<sup>rd</sup>.Floor 5700 Young Street  
North York, ON  
M2M 4K5

**Sent via email to:**  
**drugprograms@moh.gov.on.ca**  
**original mailed**

Dear Susan Paetkau:

Thank you for responding to our December 18, 2006 letter to Minister of Health, George Smitherman in which we requested the Ontario Drug Benefit 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 the minister's expert advisory committee, the Committee to Evaluate Drugs, 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 Ontarians 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. This medication is an ideal candidate for the rapid review process as it would provide substantial improvements in the quality of life to arthritis patients in Ontario.

Arthritis Consumer Experts and the Canadian Arthritis Patient 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 Ontario Drug Benefit listing decision for rituximab

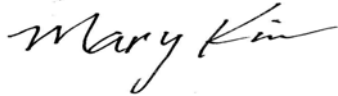
Sincerely,



Cheryl Koehn  
President  
Person with rheumatoid arthritis



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



Mary Kim  
ON Steering Committee Representative  
Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance  
Person with rheumatoid arthritis

Laurie Proulx  
ON Steering Committee Representative  
Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance  
Person with rheumatoid arthritis

on file

C.c. George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

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