



2/8/2017

Senator David Wilson
Chair, Senate Health & Social Services Committee
State Capitol Room 115
Juneau, AK 99801

Senator Mia Costello
Chair, Senate Labor & Commerce Committee
State Capitol Room 504
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Support for Senate Bill 32

Dear Senator Wilson and Senator Costello:

On behalf of the more than 75 thousand patients in Alaska with autoimmune diseases, the American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association (AARDA) would like to voice its support for SB 32. In accordance with the proposed legislation, pharmacists must communicate with the authorized prescriber should a substitution of a biologic drug take place. AARDA supports the cost benefits that might occur from biosimilars, and substituting a biosimilar with prescriber-pharmacist communication established between a patient's health care team will benefit patient safety.

The advent of biologic therapies has provided substantial progression for autoimmune patients suffering from serious diseases, such as MS, lupus, Crohn's, psoriasis, and rheumatoid arthritis in their treatment, which had not had any breakthrough treatments in many decades. Manufacturing a biosimilar is much more complex than manufacturing generics for small molecule drugs. Because biologics are manufactured in living organisms, biosimilars are not exact replications of their reference biologic products. Due to this variability, a patient's response to a biosimilar may not always mirror the response to the reference drug. Even minor changes in the manufacturing process can significantly affect the efficacy of the biosimilar. Autoimmune patients by nature of their disease have a higher level of immune response than normal, which puts them at a higher risk for reacting to any change. For these reasons, patient substitution decisions for biosimilars should be carefully considered and should include their physician's medical judgment.

Legislation that requires physician communication of the substitution will ensure patient safety. Further, communication will ensure that both patients and prescribers know exactly what was dispensed to their patient. Having precise and adequate information on what medicines are dispensed is essential for patient safety.

In order to protect Alaska's patients, the AARDA supports SB 32, which would ensure the physician's role and medical judgment in the care of their patients. The patient community applauds the efforts of the Senate Health & Social Services Committee and Senate Labor & Commerce Committee to ensure that biosimilars are dispensed in a safe manner assures patient's safety and does not impede patient access.

Sincerely,

Virginia Ladd, President & Executive Director