Information for Consumers and Carers

Biosimilar Rituximab on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)

What is a biological medicine?

Biological medicines are complex substances made by living cells or organisms. Even with the same brand no two batches are the same.

When a new biological medicine is marketed, it is known as the ‘original’ or ‘reference’ brand.

What is a biosimilar medicine?

A biosimilar medicine is a very similar version of an original brand of biological medicine. Biosimilar medicines are marketed once the patent on the original brand expires.

Biosimilar medicines have been evaluated by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) in Australia to show they are as effective and safe as the original brand.

Biosimilar medicines are used to treat the same diseases, in the same way, as the original brand. In Australia, biosimilar medicines have been used safely since 2010.

Why are biosimilar medicines important?

If there is a shortage of your usual brand, biosimilar medicines give you access to more options.

Biosimilar medicines encourage price competition, saving the government money which can be spent in other areas of healthcare.

What is rituximab?

Rituximab is a biological medicine that is used to treat serious diseases and chronic conditions such as cancers, rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune diseases.

Mabthera® is the original brand of rituximab.

Biosimilar rituximab on the PBS

Riximyo® is a biosimilar of rituximab, assessed by the TGA to be very similar to the original brand Mabthera®.

Riximyo® was listed as a biosimilar on the PBS on 1st October 2019.

Who chooses the brand?

In Australia, rituximab infusions are administered in a hospital or clinic. The choice of brand used is decided by a clinician-led committee.

If you would like to talk about which brand is best for you, speak with your doctor or pharmacist.

Will I notice any difference if I switch brands?

Riximyo® is as effective and safe as Mabthera® and provides the same health outcomes.

Where can I find more information?

Further information can be found on the Biosimilar Awareness Initiative webpage www.health.gov.au/biosimilars.