



Patient-Centered Biosimilars Communications Policies

Recommendations For Providers

The Arthritis Foundation believes it is in patients' best interest to prioritize proactive education and communication processes that meaningfully address questions and concerns about biosimilars. Patients currently have little knowledge or understanding of these therapies. Perhaps more so than any other stakeholder, health care providers are in a powerful position to deliver this key information and support to avoid a negative patient experiences or adverse impacts like the "nocebo effect" in which a patient has a negative health outcome out of a belief that the drug they took was lesser.

The Arthritis Foundation provides education and resources to patients with arthritis on everything from facts about their disease to information on prescription drugs and how to navigate health coverage. In preparation for the entrance of adalimumab biosimilars onto the market, the AF fielded a survey with over 3,500 responses, followed by patient focus groups to understand patient knowledge levels, comfort, and communications preferences about biosimilars. Below please find specific insights from these efforts we hope will help guide you in your communications plan with patients.

Patients don't have high levels of familiarity with terms describing biosimilars and their reference products.

- In our survey 65% of patients had not heard the term "reference product," 49% of AF had never heard the term "biosimilar," and only 21% had a good understanding of biosimilars
- Therefore, we are recommending stakeholders define the term "reference product" if they use it and clearly define the term "biosimilars" in patient-friendly language, such as "a biosimilar is a type of biologic used to treat certain forms of arthritis. They are FDA approved as having no clinically-meaningful difference from the original brand drug."

Patients want to know about a potential switch to a biosimilar.

- 85% of those surveyed would want to know if they were receiving a biosimilar in place of their biologic.
- If switching to a biosimilar is an option, AF survey respondents would want to know about it well in advance of their biologic's patent expiration (69%) and/or when the switch is imminent (61%).
- While we recognize transitions to biosimilars may be directed by health plans, we encourage providers have conversations with their patients who are currently on Humira so they are aware of this biosimilars market.

Education about biosimilars is key to building confidence in them.

- 67% of AF survey respondents would be open to using a biosimilar if they had more information; however, only 23% would be comfortable using one with what they know right now.



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- Safety risks, treatment efficacy and side effects are types of information of most interest to patients.
- We recommend communications include a combination of information about clinical safety and effectiveness and stories from other patients who have switched to biosimilars.
- To assist in building confidence and understanding about biosimilars, we encourage providers to send patients to the Arthritis Foundation [Helpline](#) and/or biosimilars [landing page](#) for more patient-facing resources and support.

Patients overwhelmingly want to hear from providers if switching to a biosimilar is a possibility.

- Health care providers (84%) were the top preferred sources of information for new treatments.
- Health care providers are the preferred source of communication for educational information about biosimilars among patient respondents (89%), followed by patient groups (58%), the FDA (37%), pharmacists (25%), and health plans (23%).
- Nearly all respondents would want to hear about a switch to a biosimilar from their doctor's office.
- In focus groups patients indicated in-person conversations with providers as the gold standard for communications, so they have a forum to ask any questions and understand their options. In our survey email was the next preferred communication channel about the change (46%) followed by a provider's patient portal (23%).
- We recommend providers communicate with patients through multiple methods if possible; focus group respondents overwhelmingly believed stakeholders should utilize multiple methods of communication, including but not limited to in-person conversations, emails, texts, and written notifications.

Patients have questions about practical impacts of biosimilars.

- Top questions were likelihood of switching and what happens if the biosimilar doesn't work as well, followed by whether it will be covered by insurance.
- Patients also wanted to know if they would be less expensive and if there would be manufacturer assistance.

There are differences in how biologic-naïve patients think about biosimilars compared to those stable on the reference product.

1. AF survey data showed biologic-naïve patients were more concerned with side effects (91%), how often the medication would be taken (69%), and how the medication is taken (79%), in addition to overall comparisons to other types of treatments (64%).
2. Biologic experienced patients were significantly more concerned with specific details around making the switch to biosimilars than biologic naïve patients. Emphasizing safety and efficacy data is particularly important for those switching directly from the reference product (86%). Real world data about switches is significantly more important to biologic experienced patients than those who are biologic naïve (53% vs 45%).