

ABSTRACT

Switch management between similar biological medicines, a communication information guide for nurses

Introduction

In 2016, ESNO was invited to contribute to the Guideline for Health Care professionals but from the very first draft it was clear that the content was highly informative but also medical oriented. In parallel, we have also seen the patient Q&A coming by and regard this as very helpful to patients but in this information flow, to the nurses there is a significant gap. This is the how to inform and communicate this material. This why and how is not addressed in the first two documents. This observation was also addressed by ESNO members organisation during the time the HCP guideline was developed, and in addition, we observed a number nursing initiatives all over Europe's in institutes and in continuing professional development activities and of examples how patients are informed, included in switch programs, contribute and initiate to education activities. For this reason ESNO took the initiative for a nurses guideline, not as a third separate information silo but to also to interconnect the HCP and the Patients guideline.

Background

Biologics are used in the field of rheumatology but also in other fields like oncology, diabetic care and gastroenterology. In the last years there has been for many biologicals a biosimilar developed. Patients will be switched depending on local rules and appointments. To provide support and information for nurses working with patients who are switching between similar biological medicines, European Specialist Nurses Organisation (ESNO) has taken the initiative to develop a special guide for nurses.

Nurses can take the lead in implementing the transition between branded and biosimilar biologic medicines. This includes managing the process before, during and after the switch. The European Commission and European Medicines Agency (EMA) has created a patient Q&A on biosimilars [1] and a Guideline for healthcare professionals guideline for healthcare professionals [2], and these publications will provide further information on this important issue.

Objectives

To provide support and information for nurses working with patients who are switching between similar biological medicines – this could be a switch between the original biologic medicine (known as the reference product or the originator product) and a biosimilar medicine (or vice versa), or between biosimilars a guide is developed.

The guide provides examples of projects and best practices based on different specialties to increase trust in biological medicines including biosimilars. Its aim is to contribute to the safe use of and trust in biologic medicines, and give nurses the tools to implement

switching decisions in a clinical context and deal with patient concerns, drawing on the learnings from real-life experiences.

Methods

We collected previous experiences from nurses with switching biologics.

A roadmap for how to inform patients, frequently asked questions and answers and points to consider when switching were discussed.

Results

The guide is made in English and will be translated in the 23 different languages of the EU.

The guide provides information about:

- What are biological medicines and what are biosimilar medicine. Extrapolation of indications.
- Moving between reference biologic medicines and biosimilars: Switching and substitution
- The benefits of biosimilars
- The nurses role in managing the exchange between similar biologic medicine, nurses are well-placed to understand the patient's perspective

Frequently asked questions and case studies are included in the document. Flow charts for switch implementation and follow up and support are developed.

Conclusions

Switching between similar biologicals need good management to succeed.

Nurses play a crucial role in communicating with patients and providing support and reassurance, before, during and particularly after the switch between the types of biologic medicines. This is built on nurses' many years of education, and their experience with patients in different situations. It is a process that requires time, patience and care. Patients may be concerned about changes in biologic medicines, and will have a lot of questions. Positive language is important in answering these questions, to provide confidence and reassurance.

Patients need to know that their healthcare professionals understand the reasoning behind the change and are confident that it is the right thing to do. To avoid confusion, the team of nurses and other healthcare professionals should have a consistent explanation that is used by all.

Follow up

1. The publication will be available end of April 2018
2. First introduction at EULAR congress June 2018, Amsterdam
3. Official launch with press moment and release 26 June, Brussels
4. Available in 7 languages with process to all European languages
5. Presented at the DG Growth Biosimilars meeting, 14 September 2018
6. An interactive website will be developed for updates and an interactive help instrument will be developed for education activities with webinar: start process October 2018.

References

1. European Commission. *What I need to know about biosimilar medicines: Information for patients*. Created: 2016. Available from: <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/20961/attachments/1/translations/en/renditions/native>.
2. European Medicines Agency and European Commission. *Biosimilars in the EU: Information guide for healthcare professionals*. Created: 2017. Available from: http://www.ema.europa.eu/docs/en_GB/document_library/Leaflet/2017/05/WC500226648.pdf.
3. Read C. *Specialist nurses support cost effective drugs for treatment*. HSJ, 2017. Available from: <https://www.hsj.co.uk/nursing/specialist-nurses-support-cost-effective-drugs-for-treatment/7015632.article>.

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European Specialist Nurses Organisations

The goal of the European Specialist Nurses Organisations (ESNO) is to facilitate and provide an effective framework for communication and co-operation between the European Specialist Nurses Organisations and its constituent members. ESNO represents the mutual interests and benefits of these organisations to the wider European community in the interest of the public health.

Members of ESNO consist of individual European specialist nurses organizations.

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