Biosimilars switch: do doctors and patients revert back after switching?

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Background

Biosimilars are a great opportunity to improve health systems efficiency. Their quality is certified by Regulatory Agencies and high quality clinical trials. However some reluctance about switching between originals and biosimilars still remains between doctors and patients because of different reasons.

Purpose

To determine if doctors or patients go back to initial treatment after switching between biologic originals and biosimilars in real life.

Material and methods

OBSERVATIONAL, RETROSPECTIVE STUDY

Electronic prescriptions were used to identify all patients under biologic treatment which had a biosimilar available.

Patients switched from original to biosimilar or vice versa were selected for evaluation.

If treatment remained unchanged after switch until the time of evaluation it was considered successful, understanding that both the patient and the doctor were satisfied enough.

If the change was reverted the clinical file was reviewed to assess the reason.

Results

5.909 patients treated with mentioned biologics. 874 received a biosimilar but only 250 had a switch.

ETANERCEPT

- 41 Enbrel to Erelzi
- 4 Enbrel to Benepali
- 3 Benepali to Erelzi

→ no switch reverted

INFLIXIMAB

- 34 Remicade to Inflectra
- 1 Inflectra to Remicade

→ no switch reverted

FILGRASTIM

- 116 Neupogen to Accofil (74,4%)
- 12 Accofil to Neupogen (7,7%)
- 26 patients had more than one switch (16,7%): most times because drug shortages; only 2 (1,3%) patients switched because patient (fatigue) or doctor (inefficacy) decision

ERITROPOETINS

- 12 Aranesp to Binocrit

→ no switch reverted

Conclusions

- Despite initial reluctance to switch, no significant problems were identified.

- Monitoring switch reversion is a useful tool to monitor problems when introducing biosimilars and may help to implement early actions if problems detected.

- Deeper analysis should be considered to evaluate changes from biosimilars to different drugs after switch.