California Rheumatology Alliance

Advocacy for Patient Access to Rheumatology Care

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September 2, 2015

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown
Governor, State of California
c/o Donna Campbell, Deputy Legislative Affairs Secretary
Governor's Office, State Capitol
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: Enact California Senate Bill 671 – Pharmacy: Biological Product, dispensing of interchangeable biosimilars.

Dear Governor Brown:

The California Rheumatology Alliance (CRA) is a non-profit, state medical society representing all rheumatologists in California. Its mission is advocacy for patient access to rheumatology care. Rheumatologists are entrusted with the safe care of patients with rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune diseases that require the careful choice of safe and effective pharmaceutical and biological therapies.

On behalf of the CRA membership, we urge your favorable consideration of SB 671 (Hill), to ensure the safe dispensing of biologic and biosimilar medications to patients.

California rheumatologists are keenly aware of the dramatic long-term, life changing clinical improvements that biological agents have on some of the most crippling and disabling conditions. These biologic and their biosimilar counterparts treat a variety of diseases and have had a significant impact on our patients' quality of life, preventing disability and lowering mortality.

As you consider signing SB 671, CRA wishes to convey its support for this important legislation. Specifically, SB 671 would:

- Allow pharmacists to substitute an alternative biological product (i.e. biosimilar) for a prescribed biologic product when the prescriber does not personally indicate that a substitution is not to be made; the biosimilar is deemed interchangeable by the FDA; and only in an instance where the cost to the patient of the biosimilar is less than or equal to the cost of the originally prescribed biologic; and
- Establish a communication process for the pharmacist to communicate to the prescriber, through entry into electronically accessible system that is accessible to a prescriber, the specific product provided to the patient, within 5 days following dispensing.

This legislation is ripe for passage with the FDA's approval of the first biosimilar drug in March.

Sincerely,

Gary R. Feldman, MD
President