



California
Rheumatology
Alliance

Advocacy for Patient Access to Rheumatology Care

5230 Pacific Concourse Drive - Suite 100
Los Angeles, California 90045
(tel) 310.297.9221 ▼ (fax) 310.297.9222
www.calrheum.org ▼ info@calrheum.org

September 27, 2013

The Honorable Governor Jerry Brown
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support California Senate Bill 598 – dispensing of interchangeable biosimilars

Dear Governor:

On behalf of the California Rheumatology Alliance (CRA), we urge your favorable consideration of S.B. 598, which ensures the safe dispensing of biologic and biosimilar medications to patients.

CRA is a non-profit, state medical society established to represent rheumatologists in California, whose 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.

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 response modifying agents are available for the treatment of autoimmune diseases and have a significant impact on improving our patients' quality of life, preventing disability and lowering mortality.

CRA wishes to convey its support of S.B. 598. Importantly, the bill requires that a pharmacist may only substitute a biosimilar product for the prescribed biological product if the prescriber does not indicate either orally or in writing "do not substitute," or words of similar meaning. Additionally, it requires the pharmacy to inform the prescriber, or enter the appropriate information in a patient record system shared by the prescriber, within five business days of the selection.

Physicians must be involved in decisions regarding their patient's use of a biosimilar. Allowing health systems to impose an automatic substitution for biologics is not safe for patients without having a full understanding of their health history. In the best interest of the patient, physicians must know what medicine their patients receive and the prescribing physician must be notified in a timely manner whenever a patient's biologic medicine is substituted.

Therefore, we respectfully request your support of S.B. 598. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gary R. Feldman, MD
President