Northwick Park Hospital: BioSNiP - Biosimilars Switching at Northwick Park

SUMMARY
Northwick Park Hospital, in collaboration with a local patient-led support group REAL, part of the charity Arthritis Care, has initiated and implemented a high-intensity switching programme (BioSNiP) that helps rheumatoid arthritis (RA) patients currently treated with Enbrel to efficiently switch to the biosimilar Benepali, which has a similar efficacy and safety profile but offers a large cost saving for the NHS.

THE CHALLENGE
• Biologic therapy is an effective treatment option for patients with rheumatological diseases who fail to respond to first line treatment, however, the associated high cost of the drugs limits their widespread use.
• In 2016, the biosimilar Benepali was approved in the EU and licensed in the UK for RA.
• Benepali offers the potential for large drug acquisition cost savings, different hospitals have adopted varying strategies to switch patients from Enbrel to Benepali.

THE SOLUTION
• Current NICE guidelines recommend the development of local policies to support the introduction of biosimilars into care pathways as they become available.
• A proportion of patients at Northwick Park receive the biologic Enbrel (etanercept). In summer 2016, the rheumatology department at Northwick Park identified a need for a plan to switch patients with RA to Benepali.
• The process of switching patients to Benepali began after full approval from all rheumatology consultants to enrol all RA patients into the BioSNiP programme (Figure 1).
• A gain-share arrangement between the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and the provider incentivised the Trust to put resources into switching patients to similarly efficacious but more cost-effective medication and supported the recruitment of a pharmacist to facilitate BioSNiP.
• Northwick Park took a patient-centric approach when initiating BioSNiP by collaborating with REAL and providing patients with information about switching to Benepali through letters, phone calls and opportunities to contact their pharmacist (Figure 1).
• The programme commenced on 1st January 2017 and included a dedicated weekly biosimilars switching clinic to switch all patients with RA receiving Enbrel to Benepali, in a timely and safe manner.
• All patients could request to switch back to Enbrel should there be any concerns about the effectiveness or safety of Benepali.

SERVICE PERFORMANCE AND OUTCOMES
Service Outcomes
• Northwick Park successfully switched 98% of RA patients recruited to the BioSNiP switching programme, from Enbrel to Benepali.
• Six patients switched back to Enbrel due to adverse events (AEs).

Clinical Outcomes
• No increases in DAS28, HAQ-DI or EQ-5D scores were observed following the switch.

Financial Outcomes
• Benepali offers the potential for large drug acquisition cost savings at approximately £2,550/patient/year (derived from London Northwest Hospital pharmacy data).

INNOVATIVE APPROACH AND SCALABILITY
• Other NHS Trusts have processes in place to actively switch patients from originator to biosimilar drugs. However, patients are often switched during their regular clinic visits, for example: NHS Grampian RA patients were switched from Enbrel to Benepali as they attended their regular six-monthly review appointment.
• A similar switching clinic was implemented by NHS Southamptom to switch gastroenterology patients receiving Infliximab to CT-P15. However, unlike BioSNiP, there was no involvement with patient groups or charities.
• To effectively roll out the clinic to other Trusts, similar gain-share agreements will need to be agreed with the Trust’s CCG, and the Trusts must allocate some of this gain to the rheumatology department to realise the savings.

PATIENT FOCUS AND SATISFACTION
• ‘Patient-centricity’ was integrated into the design of the switching clinic to ensure patients felt empowered throughout the switching process and were fully engaged.
• Savings made by switching patients to Benepali were used by Northwick London NHS Trust to employ another pharmacist (two days/week) to provide a better service, improving patients’ treatment experience.
• Results of a post-switching Biosimilars Questionnaire showed that 44% of patients were pleased with the treatment change.

References