Biosimilar FAQ

What is a biosimilar?

A biosimilar is a biologic medication that is made from proteins, cells, and tissues that target the immune system. The term "biosimilar" means that the medication is highly similar to the brand name biologic (aka "originator").

Is a biosimilar the same as a generic drug?

No. Generic drugs are manufactured by a chemical process and so they are completely identical to brand name drugs. However, since biologics and biosimilars are made from living proteins, it is impossible to make them identical to each other. Nonetheless, biosimilars are considered to be bio-therapeutic products that are similar in terms of quality, safety, and efficacy to the reference product.

Does the originator work better than the biosimilar?

No, studies have shown that there is no difference in efficacy of a biosimilar compared to the originator product. There is also no difference in antibody development between the biosimilar and originator product.

Is there a difference in the side effects between the originator and a biosimilar?

No, studies have **shown** there is no difference in side effects between the originator and the biosimilar because they are highly similar medications.

Have biosimilars been used before?

Yes, biosimilars have been used in Europe since the early 2000s, and finally received approval in the United States. Many other biosimilars are expected to be coming to the market in the next several years.

How is a biosimilar dosed and administered?

Biosimilars have the same mechanism of action, route of administration, dosage form, and strength as the reference product.

Is there a different order to check a biosimilar drug level and antibodies?

No, the order to check a level or antibodies is exactly the same as the originator. This highlights how similar these two medications are.

Why are we suddenly using biosimilars instead of the brand name biologics?

Biosimilars are now the preferred product on many insurance plans. Biosimilars are expected to be 15-30% less expensive than brand name biologics and have the potential to dramatically decrease healthcare dollars spent on biologic therapy.