Physician Understanding and Willingness to Prescribe Biosimilars: Findings from a US National Survey

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ABSTRACT

Background: Biosimilars have the potential to increase patient access and significantly reduce healthcare costs in the US. However, uptake in the US has been slower than anticipated, limiting the benefits of biosimilar competition. Understanding the factors that affect uptake is critically important to realize the benefits of biosimilars.

Methods: A US national survey study was conducted electronically from December 11, 2019 to January 8, 2020. The survey was administered to 507 US healthcare professionals practicing in dermatology, gastroenterology, hematology, oncology, nephrology, or rheumatology. The survey evaluated prescriber attitudes toward biosimilars in general, as well as prescriber decision making, using a series of hypothetical scenarios with fictional biological products.

Results: Fewer than half had a baseline understanding of key elements of biosimilarity, even among respondents who had previously prescribed a biosimilar. Regardless of previous experience, all respondents benefited from receiving additional information about biosimilarity, indicating the potential benefits of educational efforts for prescribers across all specialties and levels of experience. Prescriber choice was driven primarily by formulary status; however, respondents identified a variety of factors that would influence their willingness to prescribe a biosimilar, including financial savings to the patient, pharmacovigilance, patient experience, and education on the FDA approval process. Over one-third of participants indicated a preference for reference products and nearly half indicated a hesitancy to try biosimilars until they have been on the market longer. Naming conventions for biosimilars did not affect prescribers' willingness to prescribe biosimilars.

Conclusions: Gaps in prescriber knowledge and hesitancy toward biosimilars remain significant challenges for biosimilar uptake. While formulary status of a biosimilar product strongly influences prescriber choice, additional prescriber education on biosimilarity is needed.

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