Eculizumab biosimilar: Patient Information Sheet

**What is eculizumab?**

Eculizumab is a medicine used to treat a number of different conditions including paroxysmal nocturnal haemoglobinuria (PNH) and atypical haemolytic uraemic syndrome (aHUS). It belongs to a group of medicines called monoclonal antibodies.

**How does eculizumab work?**

In conditions where eculizumab is used the body’s inflammatory systems attacks its own cells. Eculizumab binds to a protein that causes the inflammation and prevents it attacking and destroying the body’s cells.

**How is eculizumab made**?

Eculizumab is a biological medicine. Biological medicines are medicines made or derived from living cells. Biological medicines were first used to treat people with serious illnesses in the UK over 20 years ago and they have improved the lives of millions of people worldwide.

**What versions of eculizumab are available in the UK?**

Until recently, only one pharmaceutical company made eculizumab. Now two other companies make a biosimilar eculizumab.

**What is biosimilar eculizumab?**

Biosimilar eculizumab is a highly similar copy of the original eculizumab medicine. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines a biosimilar as a medicine that is similar in terms of quality, safety and effectiveness to the original licensed product.

**Are biosimilars safe?**

The body in the UK who regulate medicines is the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). All medicines have to pass rigorous tests for quality, biological activity, safety and effectiveness. Biosimilar medicines pass the same tests as the original medicine.

**What does treatment with biosimilar eculizumab mean for you?**

Whether you are due to start treatment with eculizumab for the first time or have agreed with your clinician that your treatment will change from Soliris® to biosimilar eculizumab (Bekemv® or Epysqli®), you can expect the same results.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) produces guidance for healthcare. If NICE recommends the original biological medicine in their guidance, the same recommendation applies to the biosimilar medicines.

All versions of eculizumab can cause similar side effects. If you experience any problems with your treatment, report it promptly to your treating clinician, nurse or pharmacist.

**What are the benefits of biosimilars?**

Many original biological medicines are expensive and the number of conditions they treat is increasing. Biosimilar medicines are highly similar to the original medicines and have the same quality, safety and effectiveness as well as being less expensive.

Therefore, the savings made by using biosimilars allow the NHS to treat more patients.

**Further advice**

If you have further questions about eculizumab or biosimilars, then please speak to a member of your specialist or pharmacy team.