

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2015 - 2016, 1 - 2 June 2015

Ref No: SQ15-000514

OUTCOME: 2 - Access to Pharmaceutical Services

Topic: Biosimilars

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Brown, Carol

Question:

Does any other major country treat biosimilars as substitutable at pharmacy level (other than Quebec and Venezuela)?

Answer:

Use of biosimilars as substitutes for brand name biological medicines, while it is in early stages, is becoming established in a number of markets around the world. A decision whether to substitute may rest with the prescriber working within a reimbursement framework (of pre-defined prescribing options specified e.g. by a formulary committee or health plan) or, in some countries the decision may rest with the pharmacist. Measures of the first type are already in place, for example, in Germany, Finland, Norway and Quebec, to encourage use of the cheaper product in place of the brand name biological medicine and so reduce the financial burden on payers. Both France and the US have recently introduced measures to permit pharmacists to substitute a biosimilar in place of the branded product.

In all cases, these systems are in relatively early stages of operation as they are in Australia.