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Understanding the nocebo effect that can help in optimizing treatment outcomes with biosimilars

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Many theories have tried to explain the well-known placebo effect of some inactive ingredients as an outcome of patient's expectations. The expanded use of generics and now the increasing use of biosimilars have brought a new definition to the attention of clinicians who tend to describe the correlation between negative expectations or negative communications with negative subjective treatment outcomes as the nocebo effect, a phenomenon that can cause the induction or the worsening of symptoms by sham or active therapies may account for some adverse events (AEs) reported by patients following treatment. Nocebo responses may occur as unintended result of the requirement for healthcare professionals to explain possible complications and side effects when initiating treatment. Misleading or over negative communications may set negative expatiations at the patients' level which may ultimately trigger negative perceptions of treatment outcomes and a tendency to overreport adverse events and to withdraw from treatment regimens. Proper fact-based explanations by health care professionals coupled with strategies to reassure and engage patients upon initiating or switching to a biosimilar are key in ensuring better treatment outcomes and sustainability on biosimilars to ensure broader access for patients to complex biologics and reduce the financial burden on health care systems.

Recent Publications

1. Rezk M F and Pieper B (2017) Treatment outcomes with biosimilars: be aware of the nocebo effect. Rheumatol Ther. 4(2):209-218.
2. Declerck P and Farouk Rezk M (2017) The road from development to approval: evaluating the body of evidence to confirm biosimilarity. Rheumatology. 56(suppl_4):iv4-iv13.
3. Declerck P, Farouk Rezk M and Rudd PM (2016) Biosimilarity versus manufacturing change: two distinct concepts. Pharm Res. 33(2):261-268.
4. Thakur K, Biberger A, Handrich A and Rezk M F (2016) Patient perceptions and preferences of two etanercept autoinjectors for rheumatoid arthritis: findings from a patient survey in Europe. Rheumatol Ther. 3(2):245-256.
5. Thakur K, Biberger A, Handrich A and Rezk M F (2016) Perceptions and preferences of two etanercept autoinjectors for rheumatoid arthritis: a new European union-approved etanercept biosimilar (Benepali®) Versus Etanercept (Enbrel®) - findings from a nurse survey in Europe. Rheumatol Ther. 3(1):77-89.

Biography

Mourad F Rezk is the Global Head of Medical Affairs for Biogen's biosimilars portfolio He is an MD with more than 25 years of industry experience in medical affairs and R&D roles. Along the course of the last 10 years, he has been quite involved in evolving the understanding of the biosimilars role in improving access to high quality biologics and has been frequently invited as a Speaker to international congresses on biosimilars and has also published a sizable number of publications addressing different biosimilars scientific topics.

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