

From: "Drug Programs Delivery (MOH)" <drugprogramsdelivery@ontario.ca>

Date: 2020-09-02T14:34:05-04:00

Subject: RE: Follow up on Immediate Policy Action and Flexibility for Cancer Patients during COVID-19

To: "info@cancertaintyforall.ca" <info@cancertaintyforall.ca>

Cc:

Dear Mr. Bick and Ms Maskens,

Thank you for your follow up email on behalf of CanCertainty Coalition, to the Honourable Christine Elliott, Minister of Health, requesting policy actions and flexibility for cancer patients during the COVID-19 emergency. I apologize for the delay in responding.

Trillium Drug Program (observations 1 and 3 in your letter)

The Ministry of Health appreciates the impact that a cancer diagnosis can have on Ontarians. The Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) Program provides coverage for cancer drugs for a number of groups of Ontarians: children and youth without private insurance, seniors, social assistance recipients, and residents of long-term care homes as examples. These groups have minimal or no co-payments or annual deductibles.

For any household in Ontario that does not otherwise qualify for ODB Program coverage, the Trillium Drug Program provides coverage, no matter the household's income. The 4% of net income that a household is required to pay is considered by the ministry to be a reasonable contribution toward the cost of drug coverage for households. The recent change that allows reassessment of a household's deductible in the latter part of the TDP benefit year makes the TDP more flexible in determining when coverage begins.

As mentioned in my previous email, to facilitate the application process for Trillium Drug Program (TDP) during the COVID-19 pandemic, applications can now be submitted through fax or email. Applications and supporting documents can be sent to: (416) 642-3034 or [trillium@ontariodrugbenefit.ca](mailto:trillium@ontariodrugbenefit.ca)<mailto:trillium@ontariodrugbenefit.ca>.

E-mail provides convenient access for patients. Fax is an option intended mainly for the drug access navigators and social workers in hospitals who provide assistance to patients in completing and submitting TDP forms.

Applicants for the TDP are being enrolled in two to three days from the time their application is received.

Cancer treatment algorithms (observations 2 and 4)

The Ministry recognized the challenges faced by patients, prescribers, hospitals, and the healthcare system due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the importance of continued appropriate access to drug treatments for all patients, including those dealing with cancer, during the pandemic. As you were previously informed, the Ministry worked closely with Ontario Health - Cancer Care Ontario (OH-CCO) and clinician experts to mitigate risks of exposure to COVID-19 while carefully weighing in on the risks and benefits for patients with cancer who required appropriate and timely access to important cancer

treatments. A number of interim measures were implemented which included automatic 90-day renewal extensions applied to all Exceptional Access Program (EAP) requests with existing renewals between February 1 and August 31, 2020. This ensured uninterrupted access for all patients with existing approvals and was implemented as two 90-day extension periods, granted in mid-March and in May as information related to the pandemic evolved.

Additionally, several interim measures were implemented which modified requirements for drug access to accommodate the use of oral cancer drugs as a temporary alternative to the injectable cancer therapy to enable patients to stay at home or to optimize the control of the cancer as patients awaited the usual hospital-based treatments such as surgery, radiation or intravenous anticancer drugs. These interim measures were publicly announced by Cancer Care Ontario and are being used by over 100 patients each month. They continue to be in effect to meet the needs of patients and their caregivers even today as offices and hospitals are slowly reopening. Additionally, certain medications that require radiographic scans to evaluate the treatment response at the time of renewal continue to be funded until such time as the services become accessible to patients again. We continue to monitor the situation and to work with our health partners and public health to optimize the care of patients as the pandemic continues to evolve.

At this time, we are pleased that since May, the turnaround times in the Exceptional Access Program have exceeded the target turnaround times of 3 business days with many responses for cancer requests with complete information being turned around within one or two business days. The link to the weekly EAP turnaround times is provided below. Cancer drugs are categorized as priority 1 requests.

[http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/drugs/eap\\_mn.aspx#6](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/drugs/eap_mn.aspx#6)

I trust you find the foregoing information to be helpful.

Thank you for your continued advocacy for patients with cancer.

Sincerely,

David Schachow  
Director

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