

Pharmacist Perceptions May Impact Future Use of Biosimilars

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August 19, 2016

A recent survey found that pharmacists prefer naming conventions for biosimilars that includes a nonproprietary proper name with a designated suffix. Furthermore, confidence levels were found to be highest for substituting a biosimilar for the reference biologic when the products shared the same nonproprietary name.

In a [study](#) published in the *Journal of Managed Care & Specialty Pharmacy* (JMCP), researchers sought to determine pharmacist perception on biosimilar naming conventions, as well as the impact on their confidence to dispense biosimilars. Researchers also wanted to measure the burden of created laws and regulations that require pharmacists to complete postdispense notifications.

A cross-sectional survey that collected data from May 2015 to June 2015 was used for the study. Researchers also used an electronic survey engine called Qualtrics, and distributed their online electronic survey through email with participants from the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy (AMCP) and Hematology/Oncology Pharmacy Association (HOPA).

A total of 10,673 invitation emails were sent out, with eligible 781 participants who completed the survey. The results showed that 48.1% of participants reported a preference for a biosimilar naming convention that uses a nonproprietary base with a designated suffix, compared with 26.4% who preferred the use of a nonproprietary base alone, 14.2% who preferred a nonproprietary base plus a prefix, and 11.4% who prefer a unique brand name (11.4%).

Overall, pharmacists reported a preference for the use of a naming convention that included the [nonproprietary name plus a suffix for biosimilars](#). However, when participants were asked to rank their confidence in dispensing an interchangeable biosimilar based on naming conventions, the use of a nonproprietary name was only related to highest levels of confidence.

When substituting an interchangeable, 62.9% of participants said they were “very confident” or “moderately confident” in doing so. Participants were also asked to report the level of perceived burden if they were required to provide postdispensing notification to prescribers whenever a

biosimilar was dispensed.

A majority of respondents (64.9%) reported perceptions of increased burden.

The findings revealed that for the pharmacists who completed the survey, the nonproprietary name plus a suffix was the most preferred biosimilar naming convention. Furthermore, although they did report a preference for the use of a nonproprietary name plus a suffix for biosimilars, the pharmacists did not demonstrate increased confidence in dispensing an interchangeable biologic using this naming convention.

Since there was a reported higher level of confidence when the interchangeable product shared the same nonproprietary name with the reference biologic, study authors suggest using a unique name for each interchangeable may reduce pharmacist confidence in dispensing products using other naming conventions.

Authors noted that it is unclear how lowered pharmacist confidence would impact the dispensing and use of interchangeables. However, the results do suggest that using only the nonproprietary name as the naming convention for interchangeables could have a positive effect on pharmacist attitudes.

Despite several limitations to the study, the findings are intended to illustrate for legislators and regulators the importance of establishing a naming convention that encourages the acceptance of biosimilars in the United States, and offers the necessary safety and pharmacovigilance tracking to ensure proper use, according to the study authors.

Furthermore, the results suggest that as biosimilars are considered for approval by the FDA with the designation as interchangeables, it could be beneficial for the products to share the same nonproprietary name.

Authors noted the need for continued educational support for pharmacists who are involved with interchangeable biologics and biosimilars. Even though pharmacists report a general knowledge of these products, varying opinions and knowledge levels across the profession still remain, according to the study.

Lastly, researchers stress the importance of pharmacists having the necessary expertise and knowledge in this area, so that they can serve as medication experts within a health care team.