

Biosimilar insulins

Summary

The South Staffordshire Area Prescribing Group in conjunction with Burton Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (BHFT) have agreed that bio-similar insulins are to be included in the local health economy formulary as cost-effective alternatives to branded insulins.

All biological medicines, including bio-similar insulin, should be prescribed by brand name so that products cannot be automatically substituted at the point of dispensing. This is particularly important with insulin to ensure that the patient has the insulin that is intended for use with a delivery device that the patient has been trained to use, and has all the necessary items (e.g. needles, pen injection devices).

The choice of whether a patient receives a bio-similar or originator biological medicine rests with the responsible clinician in consultation with the patient.

Abasaglar[®] insulin

There are a number of biosimilar insulins becoming available in the UK market place. The first to be launched is a biosimilar of insulin glargine - the originator brand is **Lantus[®]** and the biosimilar brand is **Abasaglar[®]**. These products are **NOT** interchangeable and therefore **MUST** be prescribed by brand name.

Summary of Prescribing Principles

- All insulin preparations should be prescribed by **brand name** to ensure continuity of supply of the insulin and associated administration devices.
- **BHFT will initiate new patients requiring insulin glargine on biosimilar Abasaglar[®]**.
- Patients requiring a planned regimen change (e.g. because they would prefer a different device or have not met targets for glycaemic control) may be considered for switch from Lantus[®] to Abasaglar[®]. It is important when starting any insulin that the patient meets the criteria for treatment, is able to use the delivery device (e.g. a pre-filled pen or a pen device with cartridges) and is given appropriate instructions on how to use the insulin and device (including monitoring of blood glucose levels).
- Prescribers are reminded that whenever a patient's insulin is changed, their **insulin passport** should be updated.

Summary of Principles for Communication

It is good practice to:

- Ensure patients know their usual brand of insulin.
- Use brand names in all communications relating to insulin prescribing.
- Update the patient's insulin passport