Rheumatologists 'on back foot' with Inflectra data

The Australian Rheumatology Association is hopeful a data collection program around the use of biosimilar infliximab will happen soon, though it is "not a done deal", its president says.

The Department of Health last week released its updated biosimilar implementation framework saying that it was in discussions with the ARA to "establish a data collection ability" in relation to use of Pfizer''s Inflectra.

Although ARA president Dr Mona Marabani confirmed discussions had taken place and "we have offered to run a program to collect this data and look for any signals", she said, no agreement had been concluded at this stage.

"We hope it will come to fruition sometime soon," she told Pharma in Focus. "We would have liked to see this happen before the drug was listed. Now we are on the back foot as there is no special monitoring, and no way for prescriber to know what drug is given at the pharmacist counter."

Already as Pharma in Focus has reported, Queensland Health has moved to a dual formulary since at least the start of this year and physicians are prescribing the biosimilar to treatment naive patients.

The ARA was "in principle" not against biosimilars, Dr Marabani pointed out. But she noted that the association''s concerns remain the same - the uncontrolled switching of medicines and no way to track what is happening.

A surveillance program that will collect data on patients'' use, adverse events, any loss of efficacy over time would allow stakeholders to "ensure patients are safe and that the biosimilar is providing effective treatment for them and good value for tax payers", Dr Marabani said.

Michelle Lam, pharma in focus, 8th February 2016