



BIOSIMILAR GROWTH AND THE IMPACT ON U.S. HEALTH CARE

How **biosimilar drugs** have brought needed competition to the treatment of cancer and autoimmune conditions—and where they're headed next.

SIX YEARS AGO, THE U.S. FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION made history when it approved the country's first biosimilar drug, designed to prevent low white blood cell counts in cancer patients. Since then, the availability of biosimilar drugs—medicines that are similar in structure to their biologic reference drug and show no differences in immunogenicity, safety, or efficacy—has grown exponentially. Today, more than 30 additional biosimilars are approved to treat chronic conditions and fight cancers.

"Biologics are important because they offer new treatment possibilities and are in some cases curative. However, they're also a huge driver of cost," says Joseph Leach, MD, chief medical officer at Prime Therapeutics.

"Biologic drugs, such as the monoclonal antibodies that are used to treat various types of cancer, have skyrocketed in price over the past decade."

With the price of biologics soaring, competition from biosimilars has huge potential for curbing the rising cost of health care, explains Kelly Pokuta, PharmD, vice president and chief trade relations officer at Prime Therapeutics. Biosimilars cost anywhere from 15% to 30% less than their reference product. Biosimilars are also typically a "preferred product" among health plans, which often saves providers and patients the hassle of dealing with insurance approvals and may also improve out-of-pocket costs.

Biosimilars, Pokuta says, are how Prime Therapeutics provides affordable care while ensuring clinical efficacy and safety for its more than 30 million members. "Our job is to try and make sure people get the medication they need, but also to help manage the overwhelming cost of health care," she says. This happens through rebates that support the lower cost of biosimilars.

To further address medical spend as more biosimilars become available, Prime launched MedDrive™, a first-of-its-kind program that aligns market-leading health plans to leverage market share and drive savings. It also brings all parts of the health care ecosystem together to ensure biosimilars are accepted as equally safe and effective drugs. By doing this, Prime can offer fully transparent total drug management solutions that help deliver significant savings.

It's clear that biosimilars will continue to impact the U.S. health care market. A leading medication used to treat chronic autoimmune conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis and Crohn's disease, will have biosimilar competition in 2023, Leach says. And these biosimilar drugs will create a more diversified drug portfolio for pharmaceutical companies—while helping consumers manage chronic conditions at a reduced cost.

"Thanks to biologics, there are now amazing breakthroughs in treating diseases like cancer and autoimmune conditions that we couldn't have dreamed of 10 years ago," says Leach. "Biosimilars make it possible for more people to afford those treatments." ■

To learn more, visit primetherapeutics.com/news

