

<b>Date:</b>	September 28, 2021
<b>To:</b>	NH Physicians, Nurses, and Pharmacists
<b>From:</b>	NH Critical Care Leadership NH Internal Medicine Leadership NH Pharmacy Services
<b>Re:</b>	Update on Tocilizumab Supply for COVID-19

Tocilizumab is currently in short supply in Canada and access to future supply for COVID-19 is uncertain at this time. NH Pharmacy Services has been obtaining stock as available intermittently through a federal reserve from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and has also been collaborating with the other health authorities in BC to redistribute tocilizumab as required. PHAC continues to work with the manufacturers of both tocilizumab and another interleukin-6 (IL-6) inhibitor, sarilumab, in an effort to secure supply for the provinces. At this time, sarilumab does not appear to be an available option. The manufacturers are also working to ensure that they continue to have enough supply for patients receiving these agents for approved indications (i.e. rheumatoid arthritis), which also limits their capacity to provide additional supply for COVID-19 (off-label) use.

Given the uncertainty around future supply, and after consultation with NH Critical Care, Internal Medicine, and Pharmacy leadership, it has been determined that the following mitigation strategy be implemented immediately to ensure judicious use of tocilizumab for COVID-19 patients:

- If an Intensivist or Internist working in ICU has not already been consulted/involved, a **second** clinical opinion must be obtained from an Intensivist\* or Internist working in ICU in order to confirm that tocilizumab is appropriate.

The regional order set for [Critically ill Tocilizumab Infusion Orders \(For COVID-19 only\)](#) will be adjusted to include this new information for prescribing.

NH Pharmacy Services will continue to closely monitor supply and transfer available stock to NH sites as required to ensure equitable access as much as possible.

The BC COVID Therapeutics Committee is currently evaluating the evidence for potential alternatives to IL-6 inhibitors such as the Janus kinase inhibitors (i.e. baricitinib), and information will be circulated as provincial treatment guidelines are updated.

Thank you for understanding the fluid nature of this situation and for your collaboration in helping us to conserve our supply of tocilizumab at this time. NH Pharmacy Services will continue to provide updates as required.

For more information on NH supply and availability contact: Regional Medication Use Management Pharmacists – [mumpharmacist@northernhealth.ca](mailto:mumpharmacist@northernhealth.ca)

\*Contact the Regional COVID-19 Intensivist on call via UHNBC switchboard