

# Tocilizumab (ACTEMRA) Interim Guidance for Rheumatoid Arthritis and Giant Cell Arteritis During Drug Shortage February 2022

VA Pharmacy Benefits Management Services, Medical Advisory Panel,  
VISN Pharmacist Executives and Rheumatology Advisory Board

*The purpose of this interim guidance is to provide general principles and suggest therapeutic alternatives to tocilizumab during the COVID-19-related drug shortage.*

## General Principles

- Every effort should be made to substitute tocilizumab SC with tocilizumab IV or an agent that has the same mechanism (e.g., sarilumab).
- If an in-class substitution is not feasible, then every effort should be made to substitute the targeted therapy (tocilizumab or sarilumab) with other targeted therapies.

## For patients with rheumatoid arthritis requiring a self-administered alternative:

- Sarilumab SC, based on availability
- Abatacept SC
- An oral JAK inhibitor (tofacitinib preferred over baricitinib and upadacitinib) with shared decision making as related to recent FDA warnings (i.e., mortality, malignancy, MACE, thrombosis).
- A different SC TNFI if patient had a prior loss of initial response (secondary nonresponse) to a TNFI (not if there was primary nonresponse)

## For patients with rheumatoid arthritis who can be given an IV infusion alternative:

- Tocilizumab IV, case by case based on site resources/availability of vials.
- Abatacept IV
- Rituximab IV
- Infliximab-abda IV if patient had a prior loss of initial response (secondary nonresponse) to a different, non-infliximab TNFI product (not if there was primary nonresponse)

## For patients with giant cell arteritis (GCA):

Sites should query rheumatology to assess number of patients actively on tocilizumab for GCA because these patients are at highest need of continuation of tocilizumab therapy and should be prioritized for available vials as they are obtained. If a glucocorticoid-sparing, targeted agent is urgently needed, off-label use of the following agents may be considered if tocilizumab is not available:

- Sarilumab SC, based on availability
- Ustekinumab with maintenance of glucocorticoid therapy
- Abatacept

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