

WORLD NEWS

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Online biosimilars resource for patients across Latin America

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A new online resource on biological and biosimilar medicines in Latin America – created for patients, the organizations who represent them and those who want to understand more about how these issues affect patients in the region – has been launched by the International Alliance of Patients' Organizations (IAPO).

The platform, called IAPO Americas, provides patients' organizations from across Latin America with up-to-date, evidence-based information on the science, technology and regulatory information relevant to biological and biosimilar medicines [1]. It comes after IAPO launched its Patient-Centred Healthcare Indicators Review [2] and the publication of its 'Biological and biosimilar medicines: an information and advocacy toolkit for patients' organizations in 2013 [3].

Available in English, Portuguese and Spanish, the new online platform hosts a range of resources, events and a blog for discussion on current issues relating to patient engagement, all to ensure the patient's voice is informed and heard.

Informing patients

In the past decade, there have been many developments in biological and biosimilar medicines across the world. This raises the need for patients' organizations and patients themselves to understand more about the medicines and what this means in a national and regional context.

Health and medical decisions made at every level – including those related to biological medicines – affect patients' lives. Therefore, patients have a right to play a meaningful role in decisions made about their care. The patient's voice must be heard to ensure that these decisions reflect the needs, preferences and capabilities of patients, which can lead to a more appropriate and cost-effective way of addressing many different conditions [4].

There is growing evidence that patient-centred health care promotes greater patient responsibility and optimal usage too. This, in turn, leads to improved health outcomes, quality of life and patient satisfaction.

This is only possible when patients are informed and understand the issues they face.

A Latin American context

As governments work to increase access to health care in Latin America, more biological and biosimilar medicines will become available to patients [5]. The IAPO Americas platform provides

an opportunity to take stock of the situation and to provide new and frequently updated information regarding these medicines to patients.

Ms Eva Maria Ruiz de Castilla, Governing Board member of IAPO, said, '*We hope this platform will enable patients and patient groups to make informed judgements on the value of biological and biosimilar medicines and to actively engage in debate and discussion with other stakeholders involved in healthcare.*'

There is a growing need to explore the associated questions around biosimilar medicines for patients [6]. As biosimilar medicines become more widely available, issues such as regulation, transparency, access and patient information available will become even more important.

IAPO's aim is that IAPO Americas will be a useful and guiding resource both now and in the years to come.

IAPO Americas is available at: www.iapoamericas.org

Competing interest: IAPO collaborates with industry partners within the boundaries of the Consensus Framework for Ethical Collaboration. More details are available on IAPO's website.

Provenance and peer review: Not commissioned; internally peer reviewed.

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