Psoriasis is a chronic inflammatory condition characterized by thick, itchy, red, scaly skin lesions that mostly appear on the scalp, elbows, knees, hands, feet and genital areas. It affects about 2% of the world’s population. In Canada, this translates to about 650,000 patients. Men and women are equally affected. Symptoms appear between the ages of 15 to 20 years, with a second peak between 55 and 60 years of age.

The severity of psoriasis ranges from mild to severe. Approximately one-third of those with psoriasis have a moderate-to-severe form of the disease. The mainstay for the treatment of the mild form of psoriasis is topical therapy such as emollients, salicylic acid, corticosteroids, vitamin D analogs (e.g. Dovonex), tars, etc. For patients with moderate to severe psoriasis, phototherapy (ultraviolet light A or B) or systemic therapy (e.g. methotrexate, cyclosporine, etc.) is used, after failing treatment with topical therapy.

The newest agents in the treatment of psoriasis are the biologicals like Enbrel, Amevive and Raptiva. The biologicals are drugs that specifically target the underlying process of psoriasis i.e. they are believed to act by affecting the proinflammatory activities of the body’s autoimmune system. Biological agents are typically administered by injection or infusion in outpatient clinics. Enbrel’s recommended dosing is 50mg subcutaneously twice weekly for 3 months, followed by a reduction to a maintenance dose of 50mg per week. A package of 4x50mg Enbrel pre-filled syringes costs $1,414. At the recommended dosing, Enbrel’s annual cost would be about $21,200. Comparatively, the annual cost of treatment with systemic agents is about $329 for methotrexate and about $3000 per year for cyclosporine.

Therefore, for clients who have adopted ClaimSecure’s Managed Formularies, the drug will be placed under Special Authorization. The Special Authorization program provides plan sponsors with a tool to ensure that psoriasis patients meet ClaimSecure’s clinical guidelines for use. Approvals will be authorized for adult patients with moderate to severe chronic plaque psoriasis with at least 10% body involvement and who have tried and failed phototherapy and have tried and failed and/or are intolerant to at least 2 systemic therapies and are being treated by a dermatologist. However, for group plans with open formularies, Enbrel will automatically be covered. If you require additional information about Enbrel, please contact Shellina Sevany in ClaimSecure’s Clinical Services Department at (905) 949-3025 or 1-888-479-7587 ext.3025.

References: