# [Template letter for switching]

# Best-Value Biological Medicine (ETANERCEPT): Benepali®

Dear [insert name of patient]

You have been given this letter because you are being treated with a medicine called Enbrel®. This contains etanercept and is used to treat a variety of inflammatory conditions including rheumatoid arthritis and psoriasis.

Etanercept is a biological medicine that acts on the immune system. It is made from living cells, rather than being built from synthetic chemicals like other medicines.

Previously, there was only one pharmaceutical company that made etanercept, and their version of etanercept is called Enbrel®. After an agreed number of years (patent), however, other companies are allowed to produce their own copies of etanercept. These copies are called biosimilars.

## What is a biosimilar?

Most medicines, like paracetamol, are relatively simple and easy to produce and copy. The resulting copies are known as generic medicines.

Biological medicines, like etanercept, are more complicated to produce and copy. The copies, rather than being identical, are highly similar to the original biological medicine and are therefore called biosimilars. They have been thoroughly tested to show that there is no difference in terms of how the medicine works, its effectiveness and safety.

Biosimilars of etanercept are now available in Ireland. The HSE Medicines Management Programme has undertaken a review of all products containing etanercept. Benepali® is recommended as one of the biological medicines of choice for patients who are prescribed etanercept. Benepali® is a biosimilar, and is provided to the HSE at a much lower cost than Enbrel®. This helps the HSE to provide medicines to patients at a better price, and ensure efficiencies for the health service.

## What does this mean for me?

Because Benepali® etanercept and Enbrel® etanercept both contain the same biological medicine (etanercept), the treatment of your condition remains unchanged. You will now be prescribed and dispensed Benepali® instead of Enbrel®. You will continue to be looked after by the same team, in the same clinic, and in the same manner. In addition, your dose and frequency of injection will also be unchanged.

Benepali® is presented in a different injection device to Enbrel®. As a result, there will be a change in the injection device that you use to administer etanercept. The HSE Medicines Management Programme have assessed the two

injection devices and noted that the differences between the two devices are minor. A visit by a nurse to your home can be arranged in order to show you how to use the new injection device.

If you are happy to switch from Enbrel® to Benepali®, we will ensure that you are provided with information and support to enable you to be confident to switch. Based on careful review of previous switches to biosimilars that have been carried out, we do not expect patients to experience problems because of changing to the biosimilar, Benepali®.

If you would like any more information regarding biosimilar etanercept (Benepali®), or if you have any questions regarding any of the issues raised in this letter please feel free to discuss them with us.

Yours sincerely,

[insert name of consultant]