



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

The Honourable Mark Holland
Minister of Health

June 3, 2024

RE: Urgent Need to Request Canada Drug Agency Review of Rare Cancer Drug

Dear Minister Holland,

Thanks for your interest in understanding better the situation facing Noor Ayesha, and many other Canadians battling cholangiocarcinoma. I am writing to you to follow up on our conversation in Parliament last Wednesday, to urge you to order a review of pemigatinib by the Canadian Drug Agency.

As I mentioned last Wednesday, Noor is a twenty-five-year-old mom in my community battling a rare and incurable cancer and while Noor has received a terminal diagnosis, her oncologist has recommended pemigatinib to prolong her life.

However, this drug is not currently recommended for coverage by the Canadian Drug Agency (CAD) and, as a result, it is too expensive for her. Her plight was recently highlighted in a [CTV News article](#) and through a [Change.org petition](#) that has garnered significant public support.

Pemigatinib is a targeted therapy used to treat certain types of rare cancers, offering hope to patients with limited treatment options. It is a standard of care second-line treatment for patients with cholangiocarcinoma that harbor an FGFR2 fusion in the cancer cells. It has been shown to extend survival for almost two years as compared to six months for standard chemotherapy. However, it costs over \$800 USD per tablet, with a total monthly cost exceeding \$15,000 USD. While Health Canada approved this drug in September 2021, the CAD did not recommend it for public reimbursement in its review in April 2022, leaving patients like Noor in a precarious situation.

Noor's oncologist, Dr. Andrea Molckovsky from Grand River Hospital, expressed frustration, stating: "The decision to recommend against funding for pemigatinib was a process that started in 2021 and finalized in June 2022. However, the clinical benefit of this drug in cholangiocarcinoma patients with FGFR2 fusions is apparent to clinicians who have had

access to this drug via private insurance or other means. It is frustrating, as an oncologist, to see one patient derive sustained benefit from this drug for the past 18 months, while watching a patient like Noor fail second-line chemotherapy, knowing that she, too, would likely benefit from this drug." Below I've included for you the words of other leading physicians on the efficacy of pemigatinib.

I urge you to request a review of pemigatinib by the Canadian Drug Agency, prioritizing its efficacy and potential to be life-saving for those it has been prescribed to but is out of reach due to CAD's coverage recommendation. Ensuring that this drug is available and affordable will not only benefit Noor, but also many other Canadians in a similar situation. The review process should aim to make this medication accessible to those who need it most.

The availability of life-saving drugs like pemigatinib is a matter of national importance. By facilitating a timely review and approval, we can uphold our commitment to the health and well-being of all Canadians. I trust that you will consider this request with the urgency and seriousness it deserves.

I would be happy to discuss further, and/or to provide additional information about the difficult situation Noor and her family are currently in.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue, and for your service to Canadians. I look forward to your prompt response and to working together to ensure that all Canadians have access to the medications they need to lead healthy lives.

Sincerely,



Mike Morrice,
MP for Kitchener Centre

Other physicians calling for CAD to recommend pemigatinib for coverage:

Dr. Jennifer Knox, Medical Oncologist at the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre and Professor of Medicine at the University of Toronto: "This drug represents real progress, a key scientific and clinical advancement."

Dr. Sharlene Gill, Medical Oncologist at BC Cancer: "Pemigatinib represents a significant advancement in the treatment of cholangiocarcinoma and can offer a lifeline to patients with this rare cancer."

Dr. Tim Asmis, Medical Oncologist at The Ottawa Hospital: "Access to pemigatinib could drastically improve the quality of life and outcomes for patients who have exhausted other treatment options."