**RATIONALITY:**

To ensure a consistent approach to medication brand change requests for patients at the BC Cancer Agency.

**DIRECTIVE:**

The current contract brand of medication will be dispensed for all patients, unless there is a medical reason requiring another brand of the same medication.

**PROCEDURES:**

1. If a verbal request is received from the patient to change to an alternate brand of medication that is not the current contract brand, then a pharmacist will review the nature of the request.

2. If there is no medical reason for requiring a change in brand, then the pharmacist will provide the ‘Patient Guide to Generic Medication” patient handout (Appendix A) to help answer any questions. The current contract brand of medication will be dispensed. If a patient insists on an alternate brand, they will have the option to obtain the alternate brand at a community pharmacy at their own cost.

3. If there is a valid medical reason for requiring a change in brand, either as documented on the prescription by the prescriber or in the professional judgment of the pharmacist after speaking with the patient, then an alternate brand may be dispensed. The reason will be documented in WORx and on the prescription.

4. If a prescriber writes ‘no substitution’ or ‘provide x brand’ on a prescription, but does not provide a reason, and after speaking with the patient the pharmacist is unable to determine a valid medical reason, then the pharmacist will contact the prescriber for clarification.
What Are Generic Drugs?

What is a generic drug?
A generic drug has the identical active (“medicinal”) ingredient in the same quantity as the brand-name drug but manufactured by a different company. About 45% of all prescriptions filled by pharmacies use generic drugs.¹

When the patent of a brand-name drug runs out, other companies can make generic versions of the drug. There may be many generic versions of the same drug. Some generic drugs may be made by the same companies that make the brand-name products.²

Are generic drugs as good as the brand-name products?
Health Canada requires that a generic drug works in the same way in the body as the brand-name drug. It delivers the same amount of active ingredient at the same rate as the brand name drug. Generic companies must follow the same rules as the brand-name companies for the manufacturing process and for the quality of their ingredients.

How are generic drugs different from brand-name drugs?
Generic drugs may contain different inactive (“non-medicinal”) ingredients for the colour or the shape of the drug. Health Canada requires that if any different inactive ingredients are used, they have not changed the quality, safety or effectiveness of the generic drug.

Are some generic drugs made overseas?
About 80% of the drugs (generic and brand-name) used in Canada are imported.³ Drugs can only be imported if they are made following the same international rules of good manufacturing practices as those used by manufacturers in Canada.

Further readings:
2. Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health. Similarities and differences between brand name and generic drugs. (www.cadth.ca/generic-drugs/)