

**Date:** November 1, 2021  
**Memo To:** All Island Health Staff and Physicians  
**From:** Richard Jones, Director, Pharmacy Services  
Infection Management Advisory Committee (IMAC)



**RE: baricitinib oral tablets for COVID-19: Use and Access**

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**Situation:** The supply of tocilizumab injection and sarilumab injection is unstable due to increased global demand. If tocilizumab or sarilumab are not available for the treatment of severe COVID-19, baricitinib oral is recommended as an alternative.

**Background:** The BC COVID-19 Therapeutics Committee (CTC) recommends tocilizumab injection and sarilumab injection for the treatment of severe COVID-19. Baricitinib (OLUMIANT) is listed as an alternative immunomodulatory agent. Baricitinib oral is non-Formulary for BC hospitals. The Health Canada approved indication is for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis. Baricitinib is an inhibitor of Janus kinase (JAK) enzymes.

**Guidance:** If tocilizumab and sarilumab are not available, baricitinib is recommended for patients requiring life support due to suspected or confirmed COVID-19. Life support indications include:

- high-flow oxygen (e.g. Optiflow) if flow rate greater than 30 L/min and FiO<sub>2</sub> greater than 0.4
- OR invasive or non-invasive ventilation
- OR vasopressor or inotropic support

Baricitinib oral should be administered within 24 hours of initiating life support measures. Baricitinib should only be used when life support is required for COVID-19, rather than other causes (such as bacterial infection, pulmonary embolism, etc). Tablets may be dispersed in water for administration via feeding tube.

**Dose: baricitinib dose is dependent on eGFR; duration is up to 14 days or until hospital discharge.**

Estimated eGFR	Treatment Regimen
60 mL/min or greater	4 mg PO daily x 14 days or until discharge (whichever comes first)
30 to 59 mL/min	2 mg PO daily x 14 days or until discharge (whichever comes first)
15 to 29 mL/min	2 mg PO every other day x 14 days or until discharge (whichever comes first)
Less than 15 mL/min	Not recommended

**Use of baricitinib for the treatment of severe COVID-19 is restricted to prescribing or approval by Intensivists or Infectious Disease physicians.**

To contact an Infectious Disease physician to review baricitinib outside of the ICU, refer to the on-call schedule system: <https://medicalaffairs.viha.ca/oncall/BrowseSchedules/>. Under Infectious Diseases, select ID physician on call for either NRGH, RJH, or VGH Infectious Diseases. If there is no doctor listed for NRGH, please call the RJH contact covering.

**References:**

1. National Institutes of Health. Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Treatment Guidelines. Available from: <https://covid19treatmentguidelines.nih.gov/>
2. Fact Sheet for Healthcare Providers: Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) of Baricitinib. U.S. Food and Drug Administration. July 28, 2021. Available from: <https://www.fda.gov/media/143823/download>
3. Vancouver Coastal Health Pre-printed Order. Baricitinib (Janus Kinase 1 and 2 Inhibitor) Orders (COVID-19 Patients).
4. BC COVID-19 Therapeutics Committee (CTC) and COVID-19 Therapeutics Review and Advisory Working Group (CTRAWG) Clinical Practice Guideline for [Antimicrobial and Immunomodulatory Therapy in Adult Patients with COVID-19](#). October 15, 2021 Update.
5. [Use of Tocilizumab, Sarilumab, and Baricitinib in Treatment of Hospitalized COVID + Patients When Supply of These Drugs is Limited](#). COVID-19 Therapeutics Review and Advisory Working Group (CTRAWG). October 8, 2021.