

I am aware that the Arkansas legislature is currently considering a proposal concerning biological medications. One of these medications, Avastin, helped my sister achieve a quality of life that we believe would not have been possible without it. My sister is a retired teacher who, unfortunately developed lung cancer. After the chemotherapy, the doctor prescribed her Avastin. The treatment was such an amazing example of what the medicine does that the pharmaceutical company selling Avastin interviewed her about her life -changing story.

My concern, and the concern that the legislation would address, is the future introduction of biosimilar medications to American pharmacies. It seems the patents on biological medications ran out and the biosimilars are a generic form. I support efforts to keep healthcare costs down and typically have no problem with pharmacies substituting generic medications when they inform me they are doing so. However, biosimilars are not the same drug as the biological they replace.

The proposed legislation would make it unlawful for a pharmacist to sell a biosimilar as a replacement for a biological without notifying and getting the approval of the patient and their doctor. I do not know if my sister's story would be so uplifting if she was given a biosimilar without her knowledge.

Part of overcoming any illness involves the patient being educated about the disease and her treatments. No medicine that is not exactly the same as the one prescribed should be sold without consent. The consequences of such an action could be serious. The patient may have a sudden downturn in health from the switch and have no idea why.

If these medications are sold it is imperative that accurate records of precisely what biosimilar the patient is taking. This requires accurate record keeping by the pharmacy and the doctor. The legislation introduced includes a provision on record keeping that I support 100 percent.

I have spent 65 years in Arkansas. It would make me proud to know that our state took early action with such a serious potential safety issue. After seeing the quality of my sister's life improve so drastically, I would hate to think that a medication change that she were unaware of could change her situation. Everyone has the right to have all the information available to fight the terrible diseases that biological medicines treat. I hope you see things the same as I do and vote to pass this legislation. Thank you for taking the time from your busy schedule