



Which elements determine prescribing decisions for off-patent biological medicines in Belgium: A qualitative study

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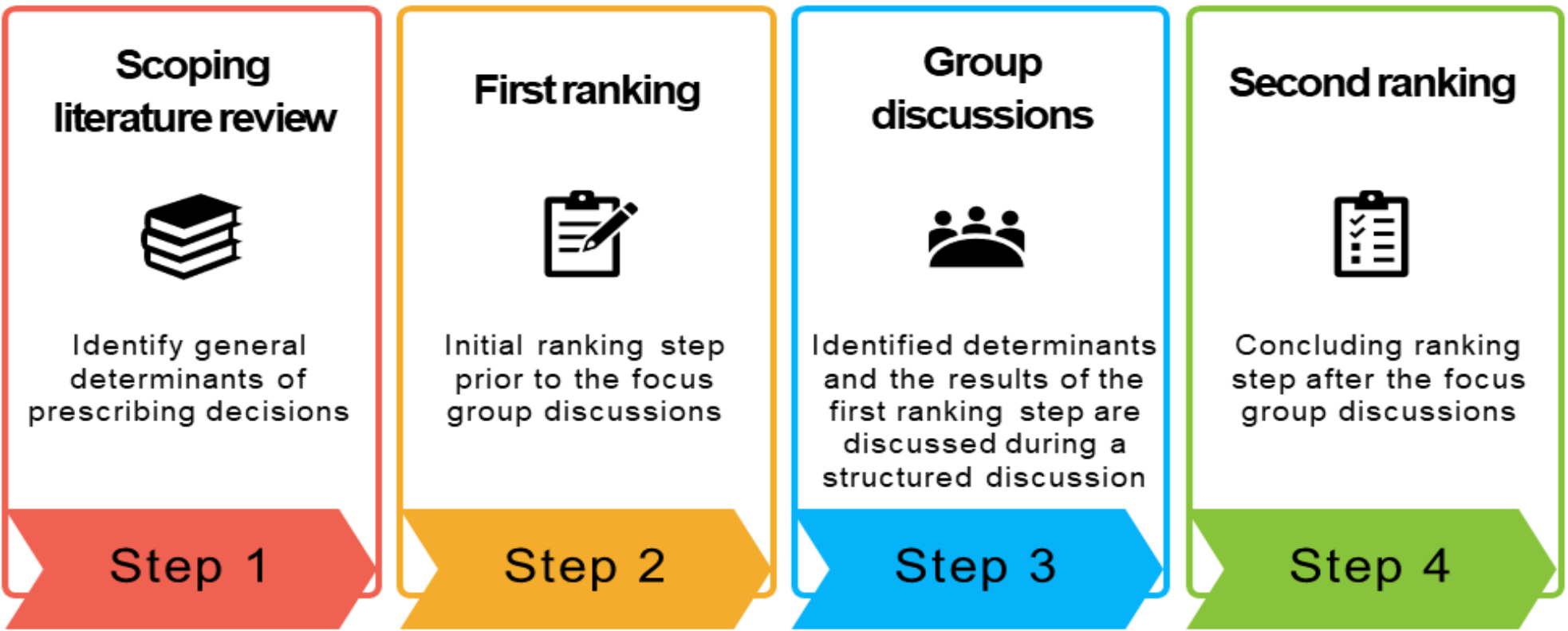
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Background and objective

- The Belgian off-patent biologicals market is characterized by low biosimilar usage and shifts towards new therapeutic classes or second-generation products.
- Drivers behind these prescribing choices are poorly understood.
- A better understanding of these decisions makes it possible to implement tailored policy measures to influence prescribing behavior.
- This study aimed to identify determinants of prescribing choices for off-patent biologicals and biosimilars in the Belgian ambulatory care.

Methods

This study involved four consecutive steps:



Results

Scoping literature review

- 53 scientific articles were identified
- 17 determinants of prescribing decisions were found and divided into five categories:

Table 1. Determinants driving prescribing decisions, identified from the scoping literature review.

Determinants of prescribing choices	
Product-related	Clinical data
	Cost
	Administration
	Novelty
Physicians' personal	Working environment
	Region
	Prescribing habits
	Age
Healthcare system-related	Preference of key opinion leaders (KOLs)
	Clinical guidelines
	Time pressure
	Financial incentives
Patient-related	Patient profile
	Patient preference
	Knowledge or perception of patients
Related to the pharmaceutical company or brand	Marketing and promotion of the pharmaceutical company
	Reputation (or trust) in the company or brand

Focus group discussions

- 19 Belgian physicians participated
- Each relevant specialism was represented during the focus group discussions

After the focus group discussions (using the nominal group technique), 7 determinants were considered most influential when prescribing off-patent biologicals in Belgium, their relative importance differs between therapeutic areas:

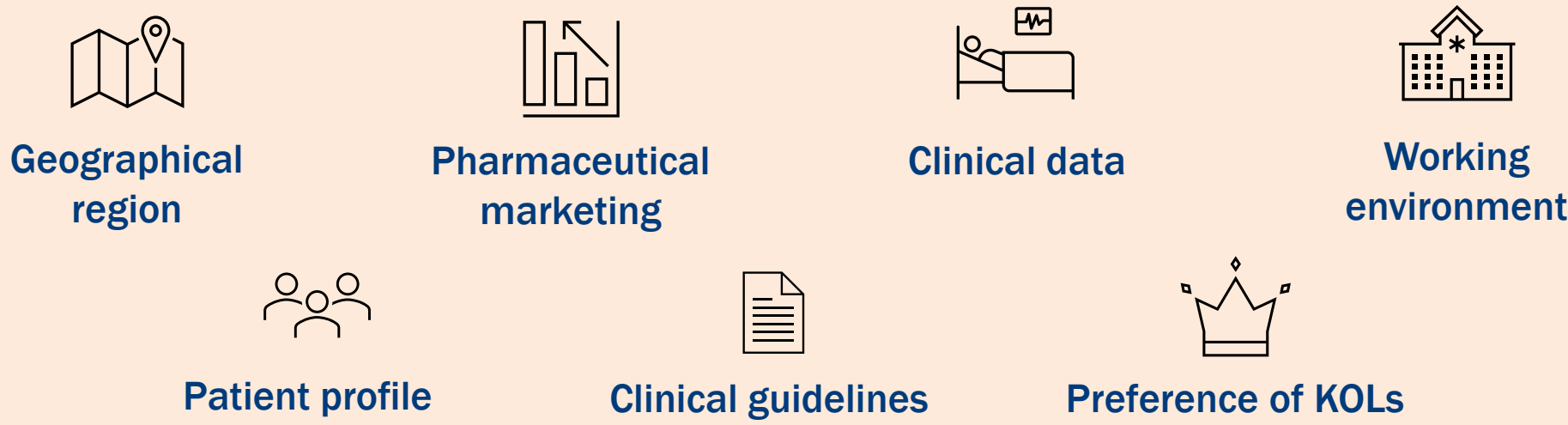


Table 2. Average ranking per determinant using the nominal group technique.

Determinants of prescribing choices	Average ranking (1-5)*
Clinical data	3.6
Cost	3.1
Administration	2.6
Novelty	2.2
Working environment	3.9
Region	3.5
Prescribing habits	3.4
Age	2.6
Preference of key opinion leaders (KOLs)	4.1
Clinical guidelines	3.5
Time pressure	3.4
Financial incentives	3.0
Patient profile	3.8
Patient preference	3.2
Knowledge or perception of patients	2.9
Marketing and promotion	3.8
Reputation of the company or brand	3.4

*Each determinant was ranked on a 5-point Likert scale, with following legend: 1 = very low impact, 2 = low impact, 3 = some impact, 4 = high impact, 5 = very high impact. Average values higher than 3.5 were considered predominant.

Conclusion

Multiple elements determine the choice of an off-patent biological or biosimilar product. The importance of each of these determinants varies depending on the context in which prescribing choices are made. These determinants can be used by Belgian policymakers to tailor future policy interventions to stimulate the usage of best-value biological medicines.

