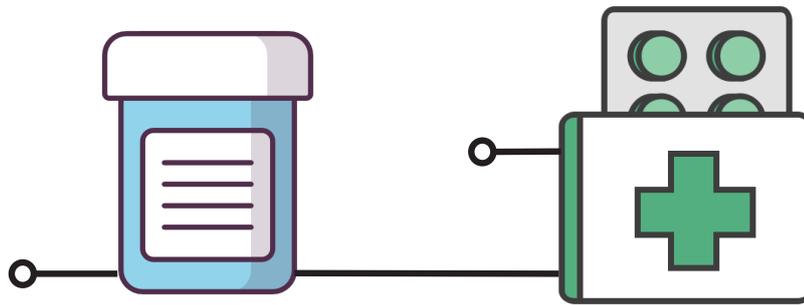


# 2018 EAHP Survey on Medicines Shortages



## MEDICINES SHORTAGES IN GREEK HOSPITALS



- 83% of hospital pharmacists are currently experiencing problems with medicines shortages.
- 53% of hospital pharmacists report that medicines shortages are a weekly, sometimes daily, occurrence.
- 82% of hospital pharmacists agreed, or strongly agreed, that medicines shortages in their hospital are having a negative impact on patient care.

With medicines shortages becoming a growing issue in the pharmaceutical world year after year, the European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP) continued its “Medicines Shortages Survey” in 2018 in order to renew the available evidence on the medicines shortage situation in European hospitals. The survey covered 38 countries and amassed a total number of 1,666 responses. 84 responses were obtained from Greek hospital pharmacists, with an increase of 70 individuals compared to the 2014 EAHP Medicines Shortages Survey, when 14 responses were received from Greece.

### 83% of Greek respondents are currently experiencing problems with medicines shortages

When asked if the shortage of medicines is a current problem in the hospital, especially in terms of delivering the best care for patients, 83% of Greek respondents participating in the survey answered with “yes”.

*\* The numbers in this country report relate to the Greek hospital pharmacists that participated in the 2018 EAHP Medicines Shortage Survey.*

*\*\* The country report uses original quotes provided by survey respondents during the consultation period. These quotes have not been altered.*



## In which area of medicines do Greek hospitals experience shortages most commonly?



57% antimicrobial agents



55% preventative medicines



45% haematology medicines



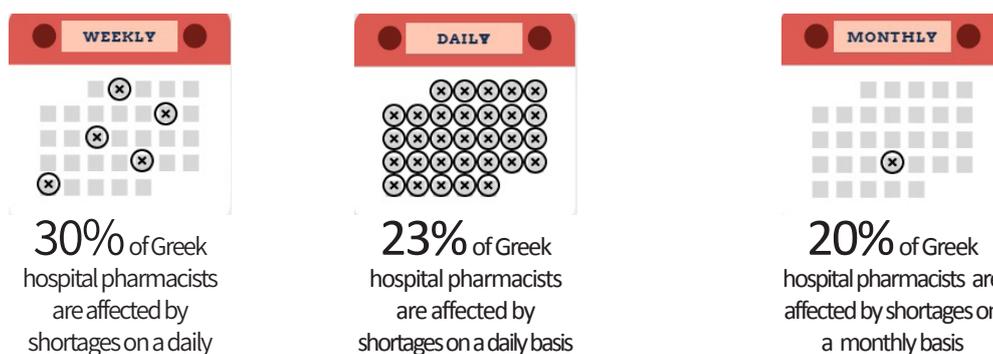
37% oncology medicines



37% emergency medicines

## 53% of Greek respondents report that medicines shortages are a weekly, sometimes daily, occurrence

It is important to assess the occurrence of shortages in a timely manner in order to know if shortages for specific medicines come in waves or if they usually manifest themselves in the hospitals. When asked how often their hospital pharmacies experienced shortages of medicines, 23% (N=19) of respondents replied with “daily”, while 30% (N=25) experienced medicines shortages on a “weekly” basis. In 20% (N=17) of Greek hospital pharmacies shortages are a monthly occurrence. When a shortage is detected hospital pharmacists work on overcoming it as soon as possible, although the timeframe depends on the nature of the shortage. In Greece, shortages usually last for up to 3 months nevertheless sometimes they are resolved within several weeks.



In order to find out the answers to questions on the availability of shortage information in Greece, respondents were asked if they are aware of a reporting system for shortages being in place at the national level. Those who replied positively were encouraged to provide further feedback on the functionality of the system. The respondents pointed out that there is a system where Greek hospital pharmacists can submit information on shortages, but 41% (N=18) believe that this system is not effective. The National Organization for Medicines is the entity responsible for shortage reporting in Greece (<https://www.eof.gr>). The following free text comments were shared by the Greek respondents on the functionality of the reporting system:

- “The EOF is the main reporting manager for the deficiencies. Usually it is informed in advance by the pharmaceutical company that has a supply problem and is proceeding to update and find a substitute drug, but not in time. There are deviations in the reported lapses of deficiencies.”
- “There is an on-line reporting system for medicine shortages in the website of the National Organization for Medicines (EOF) (<https://www.eof.gr>). The tool is supervised by EOF and hospital pharmacists can report any relevant problem. We get quick response by e-mail or phone call from EOF that informs us about the level of information that the National Organization for Medicines already has about the specific shortage problem we reported.”



## 82% of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed, that medicines shortages in their hospital are having a negative impact on patient care

In the hospital environment, medicines shortages affect patient care on different levels. The survey took into consideration budget and time. Results show that, due to shortages, hospital staff is diverted from their usual tasks for up to 5 hours (63% | N=41). In the worst-case scenario, hospital pharmacy staff must compensate the time lost due to medicines shortages with more than 10 or even 15 hours per week (23% | N=15). Furthermore, 82% (N=51) of respondents in Greece agree, or strongly agree, that medicines shortages have a negative impact on the overall hospital budget.

In regard to the steps taken to minimise the negative impact on patient care in Greece, the survey results showed that in 85% (N=54) of the cases, hospital pharmacists informed the prescriber about the shortage and recommended an alternative medicine. Other actions included investigating when the supply will be restored and planning accordingly (67% | N=43), attempting to source the medicine from an alternative supplier (including another country) (60% | N=38) or informing the prescriber of a shortage (57% | N=36).

### Action from European and national entities is needed to combat the growing threat of medicines shortages and its impact on patient care

When presented with already existing solutions at the European level, three quarters of the respondents were in favour of the initiatives taken by the European Medicines Agency (EMA), the Heads of Medicines Agency\* and the activities of COST Action CA 15105\*\*. The remaining 26% (N=16) of Greek respondents chose “none of the above” when asked which policy solution they personally supported. This particular answer may indicate that Greek hospital pharmacists are largely aware of the existing pan-European actions. 75% (N=47) would personally support greater legal clarity on the need to oblige manufacturers to report a forthcoming disruption of supply, while 70% (N=43) requested a more comprehensive database, run by the EMA, listing all medicines shortages together with advice on the shortages timeframe and available replacement therapies. Moreover, a high-level investigation, led by the European Commission, to determine the causes of medicines shortages in Europe (e.g. production issues, pricing impact and parallel trade) and their impact on both patient care and healthcare delivery would be supported by 63% (N=39) of Greek respondents. Lastly, 52% (N=32) favour an annual reporting system providing information on the extent of medicines shortages within Europe.

The following comments were received from respondents in relation to policy options on both national and European level:

- *“The investigation of causation is something important and useful for Hospital pharmacists because I think a big percentage of shortages might be due to reasons related or affected by the Hospital pharmacy procedures”*
- *“The central European design is related to the recording of the needs of the cases that need to have access to the medicine and not to the financial compensation of the supplier in relation to the cost of the product in each European country; if we continue so, Greece will face serious shortcomings since drugs are sold at low prices and ultimately we have to import them at a multiplier price through IPET”*

\*Further information on EMA/HMA task force is provided here: <https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/partners-networks/eu-partners/eu-member-states/heads-medicines-agencies>

\*\*More on COST Action CA 15105 can be found here: [http://www.cost.eu/COST\\_Actions/ca/CA15105](http://www.cost.eu/COST_Actions/ca/CA15105)