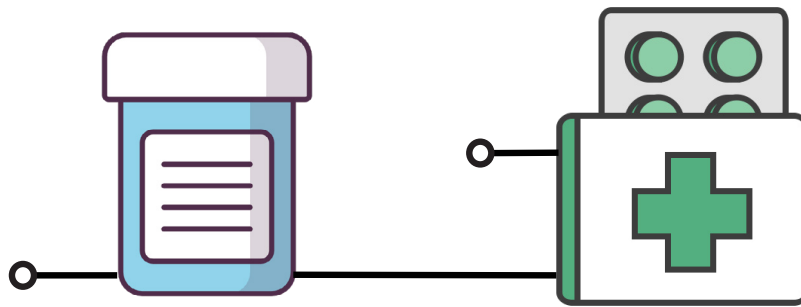
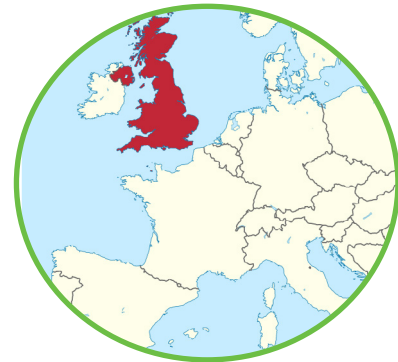


2018 EAHP Survey on Medicines Shortages



MEDICINES SHORTAGES IN UK HOSPITALS



- 95% of hospital pharmacists are currently experiencing problems with medicines shortages.
- 89% of hospital pharmacists report that medicines shortages are a weekly, sometimes daily, occurrence.
- 86% 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 and 291 responses were obtained from hospital pharmacists working in United Kingdom (UK), with an increase of 284 individuals compared to the 2014 EAHP Medicines Shortages Survey, when seven responses were received from the UK.

95% of respondents working in the UK 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, 95% of the respondents answered “yes”.

** The numbers in this country report relate to the UK 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 UK hospitals experience shortages most commonly?



85% antimicrobial agents



42% preventative medicines



42% emergency medicines



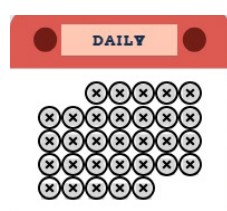
33% cardiovascular medicines



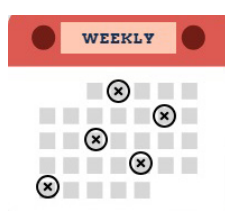
29% anaesthetic agents

89% of respondents from the UK report that medicines shortages are a weekly, sometimes daily, occurrence

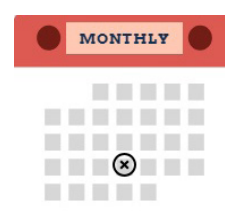
It is important to assess the occurrence of shortages in a timely manner in order to know if shortages for a specific medicines come in waves or if they usually manifest themselves in the hospitals. When asked how often their hospital pharmacies experienced shortages of medicines, 60% (N=175) of respondents replied with “daily”, while 29% (N=85) experienced them on a “weekly” basis. In 6% (N=17) of hospital pharmacies based in the UK, 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 the UK, shortages usually last for two to three months, according to the data collected by the EAHP Medicines Shortages Survey.



60% of UK hospital pharmacists are affected by shortages on a daily basis



29% of UK hospital pharmacists are affected by shortages on a weekly basis



6% of UK hospital pharmacists are affected by shortages on a monthly basis

In order to find out the answers to questions on the available information vis-à-vis shortages in the UK, respondents were asked if they are aware of a reporting system for shortages being in place at the national level. Those who responded positively were encouraged to provide further feedback on the functionality of the system. The respondents pointed out that there is a system where hospital pharmacists in the UK can submit information on shortages and 71% (N=61) believe this system is effective. Specialist Pharmacy Service and Commercial Medicines Unit are the entities responsible for shortage reporting throughout the UK (<https://www.sps.nhs.uk/>). In addition, the Department of Health is involved as well, together with several regional procurement specialists.

The following freetext comments were shared by the UK hospital pharmacists describing the reporting system:

- “We are kept up to date by representatives from the Commercial medicines Unit, who provide spread sheets which are sometimes populated as national shortages are reported or are highlighted by members of Regional collaboratives. We also get mails from global importers and specials distributors who often have information and the first we are aware of a shortage is that they are offering us an un licenced alternative.”
- “There is no one solution for all shortages. We receive spreadsheets from commercial medicines unit explaining stock shortages for NHS contracted lines. We receive updates from some individual manufacturers via email when a shortage is anticipated. Often when there is a UK shortage we are approached by import companies looking for uptake of imported goods.”



86% 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 has taken into consideration **budget** and **time**. Results show that, due to shortages, hospital staff is diverted from their usual tasks for up to 5 hours (32% | N=47) or even up to 10 hours (26% | N=38) during an average working week. In the worst-case scenario, hospital pharmacy staff must compensate the time lost due to medicine shortages with more than 15 hours per week (27% | N=39). Furthermore, 94% (N=137) of respondents 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 impacts on patient care in the UK, the survey results showed that in 80% (N=115) of the cases, hospital pharmacists informed the prescriber about the shortage and recommended an alternative medicine or investigated when the supply will be restored and planned accordingly (80% | N=115). Other actions included attempts sourcing the medicine from another supplier (80% | N=114) and informing the prescriber of a shortage (55% | N=79).

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 European level, 62% 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 38% (N=53) of respondents chose “none of the above” when asked which policy solution they personally supported. This shows an overall good level of awareness and support towards initiatives taken by the European Commission when tackling the issue of medicines shortages. 91% (N=126) of respondents would personally support a greater legal clarity on the need to oblige manufacturers to report a forthcoming disruption of supply. Furthermore, 86% (N=118) opted for a more comprehensive database, run by the EMA, listing all medicines shortages linked with advice on how long the shortage may last for and available replacement therapies. Moreover, 68% (N=94) favour an annual reporting system providing information on the extent of the medicines shortages problem within Europe. Lastly, 66% (N=91) of the respondents agreed on the need to conduct 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 patient care and healthcare delivery.

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

- “A more holistic review needs to be undertaken to understand why shortages occur and try and prevent them. Currently most shortages are managed reactively instead of proactively.”
- “Obviously with Brexit I am concerned that the situation is going to get worse in the UK with regards to drug shortages and I sincerely hope that any future scheme includes the MHRA/UK Government as part of a pan-European rather than EU solution.”

*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

