

EAHP's 2019 Medicines Shortages Report – the problem continues to grow

7 April 2020

- **95% of hospital pharmacists in 2019 reported that medicines shortages are a current problem compared to 91.8% in 2018.**
- **Antimicrobial agents remain the area that most frequently experiences shortages.**
- **Shortages should be tackled through a mix of reactive and proactive measures.**

Today, the European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP) released the results of its 2019 Medicines Shortages Survey ^[1] which showed that the number of hospital pharmacists reporting shortages to be a problem in their hospital increased compared to data published by EAHP in 2014 and 2018.

For the first time, EAHP also reached out to patients, nurses, physicians and other healthcare professionals to gather their impressions. EAHP's data collection aimed at obtaining more information on reasons for and management of medicines shortages as well as details on their impact on patients. The survey was open between November 2019 and mid-January 2020 and therefore did not take into account the availability problems that are currently arising due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

More than half of the participating hospital pharmacists indicated that they had experienced shortages having an impact on patient care in their hospital. A similar response rate was observed for physicians and other healthcare professionals. Delays in care or therapy, suboptimal treatment, including inferior efficacy, and cancellation of care were most frequently communicated. Hospital pharmacists, physicians and nurses named antimicrobial agents as the type of medicine mostly in shortages, while other healthcare professionals noticed more frequent shortages for oncology medicines.

The 2019 EAHP Medicines Shortages Survey ^[1] also collected impressions about the reasons for medicine shortages. For hospital pharmacists, the global shortage of an active

pharmaceutical ingredient as well as manufacturing and supply chain problems ranked the highest, while physicians included the pricing of a medicine, supply chain problems and issues related to parallel export as the leading reasons for medicines shortages. Several patients that participated in the data collection activity stressed their dissatisfaction with how their problem was handled since they desired the provision of more detailed reasons behind not receiving the prescribed treatment.

When comparing the percentage of hospital pharmacists disclosing that medicines shortages are a problem for delivering the best care to patients, it was observed that this figure rose between 2018 and 2019. While in 2018 91.8% of hospital pharmacists stressed that shortages are a problem in hospitals, 95% of hospital pharmacists had this impression in 2019. Feedback from the other professions differed, with 89% of healthcare professionals taking the survey agreeing that medicines shortages are a problem, while only 62% of nurses and 71% of physicians shared this view.

Medicines shortages affect patient care and healthcare professionals' daily work. Better enforcing the mandatory early notification requirements and requiring structured mitigation responses is recognised by all respondents as the best strategy to tackle shortages. EAHP consequently seeks to encourage all involved actors, including hospital pharmacists, to adopt reactive measures, such as carrying out prospective risk assessments, as well as proactive measures, like prudent tendering practices. Also, the Association would like to reiterate its request linked to the improvement of transparency and information sharing. Only a comprehensive communication strategy on shortages targeting all European states will ensure that all supply chain actors, including hospital pharmacists, receive adequate information on the shortage of medicines in their country.

The information of the report is also summarised in infographics for:

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- [Patients](#) [3]
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Links

- [1] https://www.eahp.eu/sites/default/files/eahp_2019_medicines_shortages_report.pdf [2]
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