

21 February 2013

The European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP) has published headline results of a recent survey that reveals 99% of responding hospital pharmacists say they have experienced difficulties with medicines shortages in the past year.

With over 300 respondents from 27 countries, the survey also uncovered that 63% of hospital pharmacists report medicines shortages to be a weekly, sometimes daily, occurrence. 77% consider that problem has become worse in the last year.

Announcing the results at an event in the European Parliament on access to medicines EAHP President Roberto Frontini said:

“These headline results confirm what I have increasingly heard from our members across Europe: that the shortages problem is widespread, doesn’t respect national borders, and urgently requires attention if patient care and health services are not to suffer.

Managing shortages and trying to source supply distracts pharmacists from other core tasks, places burden on support staff and can increase stress and workload in the pharmacy environment with consequent impacts on the risk of error. Substitution of medicines in case of shortage of formulary drugs can also confuse doctors and nurses, further raising risks to patient safety.

I want to take this opportunity at the European Parliament to call on all partners to work together in identifying and enacting solutions. This includes industry and supply chain actors, regulatory authorities, and all health professions involved in medicines. I also believe there is a role for the European Commission in bringing Governments and others together on this issue.”

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. EAHP is an association of national organisations which represents hospital pharmacists at the European and international level.
2. The headline results of 2 recent EAHP surveys on medicines shortages were announced at the annual reception of the European Pharmaceutical Students Association (EPSA) held in the European Parliament on Thursday 21 February 2013.

More information here: <http://www.epsa-online.org/index.php/events/annual-reception> ^[1]

3. Following the passing of policy on medicines shortages by EAHP member associations in June 2012 EAHP has sought to uncover more evidence of the prevalence, nature and impact of shortages in European hospital pharmacy. In September 2012 EAHP launched a survey on the prevalence of shortages, and in December 2012, a survey on what hospital pharmacists considered to be the impact to patient care from shortages, the perceived principal causes and the perceived principal solutions. Both surveys closed on Tuesday 19 February 2013. The full results of these surveys will be published at the 18th Congress of the EAHP. Headline results are below:

346 hospital pharmacists from 25 countries responded to the first survey focusing on the prevalence of medicines shortages. 266 hospital pharmacists from 23 countries responded to the second survey focusing on the patient impact of medicines shortages and perceived causes and solutions. Taken together, hospital pharmacists from 27 countries responded to the surveys.

- 99% of respondents say they have experienced problems with medicines shortages in the past year (survey 1)
- 63% say the problem is a weekly, sometimes daily occurrence (survey 1)
- 77% say the problem has got worse in the last year (survey 2)
- 71% of respondents identified oncology medicines as an area commonly experiencing shortage
- Thereafter, emergency medicine was identified as a common shortage area by 44%, and cardiovascular medicine by 35% of respondents (survey 1)
- 52% of respondents cited supply chain vulnerability from only having a single, or small number of suppliers of a product as a perceived principal cause of shortage problems (survey 2)
- Thereafter, quality-related production difficulties at manufacturing source, and raw material issues, were the second and third most commonly cited (survey 2)
- The 3 most popular suggested solutions were (survey 2):
 - o stronger requirements for authorisation holders to ensure the reliable supply of products for which they hold the licence;
 - o European coordination of response to shortages such as a single European information portal about shortages (e.g the FDA drug shortage index operated in the USA); and,
 - o stronger requirements for manufacturers to give due notice of likely supply interruptions.

Links

[1] <http://www.epsa-online.org/index.php/events/annual-reception>