

17 November 2014



[1]A new report on medicines shortages experienced in European healthcare systems

reveals that over 86% of hospital pharmacists are experiencing difficulties in sourcing medicines with 66% reporting this as a daily or weekly problem. The top affected areas are medicines to fight infection, cancer drugs and anaesthetics.

The report by the European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP), surveyed the experiences of over 600 hospital pharmacists in 36 European countries, and presents a striking picture of how medicines shortages are affecting the treatment of patients across the continent.

75% of surveyed hospital pharmacists either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "medicines shortages in my hospital are having a negative impact on patient care". Consequences for patients included delayed or interrupted chemotherapy treatment, unnecessary experience by patients of side effects, heightened clostridium difficile risk and deterioration in patients' conditions.

In addition to this, hospital pharmacists reported the enormous costs in time diverted to sourcing alternative supplies, increased stress and confusion within safety critical working environments, the frequent high costs of procuring alternative medicines than those prescribed, and the cancellation of service improvements due to resources needing to be reallocated to deal with medicines shortages.

Launching the report at the Brussels Press Club, EAHP President Dr. Roberto Frontini said:

"Two things always shock me about the medicines shortages problem in Europe: its scale, and the known impacts it is having on patient safety and welfare.

For too long this problem has been brushed under the carpet. It is time for those with responsibility for protecting European citizens from cross-border health threats to address the issue.

We need improved systems for ensuring early reporting of medicines supply disruptions, with causes, likely duration and available alternatives notified to healthcare professionals. We need a step change in the recording of information about the problem. This could be

addressed by the European Medicines Agency developing a database of medicines in shortage across Europe replicating that of its counterpart in the USA. We need criteria for a fair distribution in case of shortages based on patient's needs and not on commercial interests. Finally, we need an urgent sense of responsibility to be adopted by the European Commission in leading both investigation and resolution of the problem.

As our report makes clear: medicines shortages are a cross border health threat to patient welfare and the time for EU action is now."

ENDS

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. The European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP) is an association of national organisations across 34 countries representing hospital pharmacists at European and international levels. More information about the EAHP and its history here [3].

2. EAHP's most recent report on the medicines shortage situation around Europe is available here. [1]

3. With over 600 responses from 36 countries, EAHP calculate it to be the largest report of its kind ever conducted to address the information gap about how medicines shortages are impacting patient care at a pan-European level.

4. An infographic of the key results is available here [4].

5. A video giving further background to the medicines shortages problem is available here [5].

6. Requests for interviews with Dr Roberto Frontini, and other stakeholders (e.g. patient groups and other healthcare professionals) can be made by contacting [info\[at\]eahp\[dot\]eu](mailto:info@eahp.eu) [2]

7. Results from the survey can also be broken down to a national level on request by contacting [info\[at\]eahp\[dot\]eu](mailto:info@eahp.eu) [2]

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Links

[1] http://www.eahp.eu/sites/default/files/shortages_report05online.pdf

[2] <https://www.eahp.eu/contact/info/eahp/eu>

[3] <http://www.eahp.eu/about-us>

[4] http://www.eahp.eu/sites/default/files/shortages_infographic.jpg

[5] <http://youtu.be/NEUAt2g-5n0>