



Clinical Hospital of Shtip, Republic of North Macedonia

# HOSPITAL PHARMACY PREPAREDNESS FOR EMERGENCIES AND DISASTERS: LESSONS FROM A NATIONAL EVALUATION FOLLOWING A MAJOR CRISIS

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## BACKGROUND AND IMPORTANCE

- Hospital pharmacies play a vital role in ensuring continuity of care and maintaining medicine supply during emergencies.
- On 16 March, a catastrophic nightclub fire that claimed 62 young lives required an immediate and coordinated response from hospital pharmacists in the affected area. The incident exposed gaps in disaster preparedness and highlighted the need for structured planning, rapid decision-making, and interprofessional collaboration.

*This study, conducted by the Association of Hospital Pharmacists (member of EAHP), represents the first national assessment of hospital pharmacy preparedness, providing an evidence base for strengthening system resilience.*

The aim was to evaluate the preparedness of hospital pharmacies for emergencies, crises, and disasters.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross-sectional survey among hospital pharmacists using a structured 25-item questionnaire covering demographics, hospital type and capacity, pharmacy structure, preparedness protocols, medicine availability rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Descriptive analysis examined respondents by hospital category, position, and preparedness indicators.

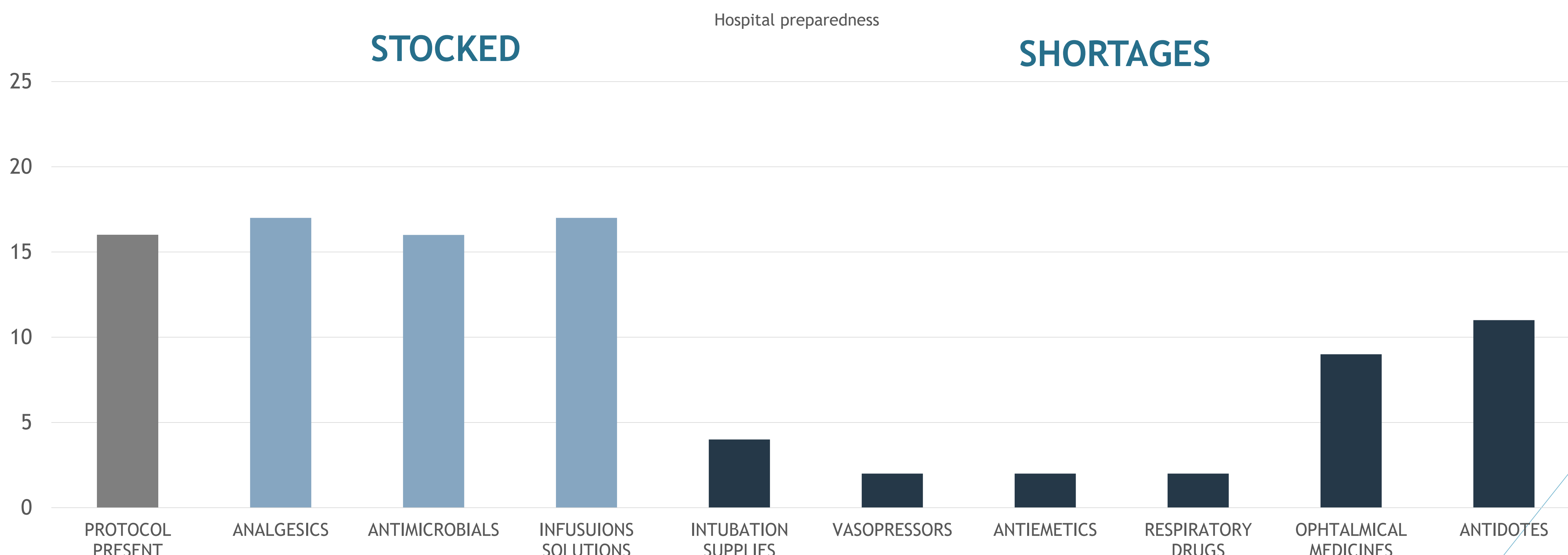
## RESULTS

Of 35 pharmacists invited, 27 participated. The mean age was 46 years (median 49) with 22 years of experience. Participants represented general (n=9), university (n=9), clinical (n=5), and specialized hospitals (n=5), mostly with 100-300 beds. Nineteen were heads of pharmacies.

Sixteen reported having a preparedness protocol, while eleven did not. Analgesics, antimicrobials, and infusion solutions were adequately stocked, but shortages were noted for intubation supplies (n=4), vasopressors (n=2), antiemetics (n=2), respiratory drugs (n=2), ophthalmological medicines (n=9), and antidotes (n=11).

### STOCKED

### SHORTAGES



## CONCLUSION AND RELEVANCE

Hospital pharmacists in our country are experienced but work in institutions with uneven preparedness. The catastrophic fire underscored the urgent need to strengthen disaster response capacity. While essential medicines are generally available, shortages of critical and rarely used drugs remain a key vulnerability. Strengthening hospital pharmacy resilience requires the implementation of standardized protocols, training and coordinated national stockpiling strategies. These measures are essential to ensure a timely, consistent and effective response during future emergencies.

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