

MEDICINE SHORTAGES IN A VULNERABLE MARKET - EVIDENCE FROM AN EIGHT-YEAR OBSERVATIONAL STUDY

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BACKGROUND AND IMPORTANCE

Medicine shortages are a serious global challenge, particularly in **developing countries with small and commercially unattractive pharmaceutical markets**, highlighting the need for comprehensive analysis.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

This study aimed to describe and analyse medicine shortages in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) from **2018 to 2025**.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

An observational study was conducted using data from the National Register of Medicine Shortages published by the Agency for Medicinal Products and Medical Devices of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Reported shortages were classified according to **ATC classification, route of administration, duration** (temporary or permanent) and reported **reasons** for supply disruption.

RESULTS

A total of 844 drug shortages were reported across multiple therapeutic classes. Distribution by the route of administration is presented in Figure 1, while the ATC distribution and shortage duration are shown in Figures 2 and 3. The highest number of shortages occurred in 2023 (n=192) and 2024 (n=177), reflecting trends identified in the European Court of Auditors' Special Report¹.

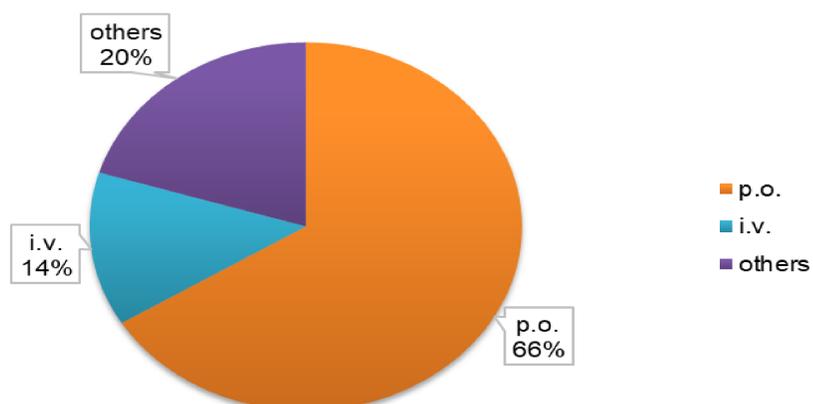


Figure 1. Distribution of medicine shortages by route of administration.

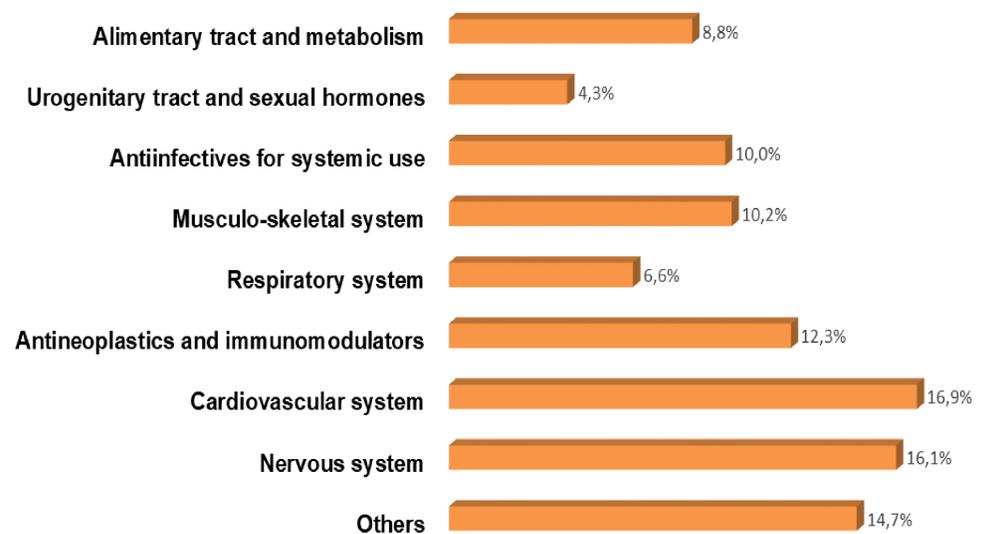


Figure 2. Distribution of medicine shortages by ATC classification.

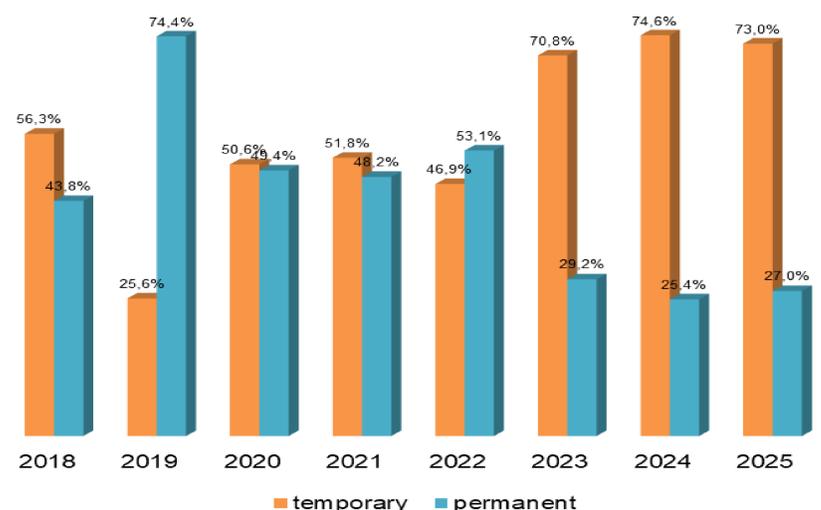


Figure 3. Duration of medicine shortages: temporary vs permanent.

Commercial reasons were the leading cause of supply disruptions, contributing to 48% of all shortages. These disruptions were primarily driven by limited pharmaceutical profitability and regulatory challenges.

CONCLUSION AND RELEVANCE

Rising shortages reflect economic and regulatory pressures, while the **low reporting of intravenous medicines**, typically used in **hospital settings**, may indicate **underreporting** and highlight the need for stronger reporting and procurement frameworks.

REFERENCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

European Court of Auditors. Special Report 19/2025: Critical Shortages of Medicines. 2025.

