

USE OF FOREIGN MEDICINES TO MANAGE DRUG SHORTAGES: ECONOMIC, RESOURCE AND SAFETY IMPACT IN A TERTIARY HOSPITAL

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Background and Importance



Drug shortages threaten healthcare delivery and patient safety, often requiring foreign imports. These alternatives increase costs and resource utilization.



Objectives



To identify shortage medicines supplied through foreign imports and evaluate their economic, resource, and safety impact.

Materials and Methods

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- Retrospective observational study (January 2024–July 2025) including all shortage medicines replaced by foreign imports in a tertiary hospital Pharmacy Service.
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- Stock, consumption, and national prices were obtained from Orion Logis, and foreign prices from AEMPS.
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- Economic impact was calculated by comparing national and foreign unit prices, adjusted to monthly consumption and duration of foreign supply.
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- Resource and safety impacts were assessed based on relabeling requirements due to complex language labeling and the preparation of informative notes for significant changes in dose, concentration, or volume.

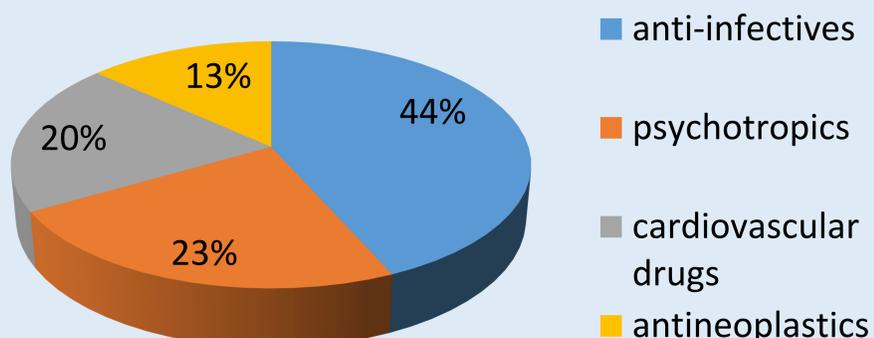
Results



41 shortage medicines were replaced with foreign imports, and 58.5% later returned to national supply.



Most affected pharmacotherapeutic groups:



Recurrent shortages required a second foreign substitution in 12.2% of cases.



Foreign medicines were more expensive in all cases (median 4.3-fold higher), increasing total expenditure by €209,419.



Relabeling was required in 9.8% due to complex foreign labeling, and 14.6% required informative notes due to presentation differences with potential patient risk.

Conclusion and Relevance

- 1 Foreign imports are a necessary strategy to manage drug shortages, but they generate significant economic and organizational burden.
- 2 Safety risks arise from foreign-language labeling and presentation differences.
- 3 Larger studies and preventive strategies are needed to reduce impact and optimize hospital pharmacy practice.