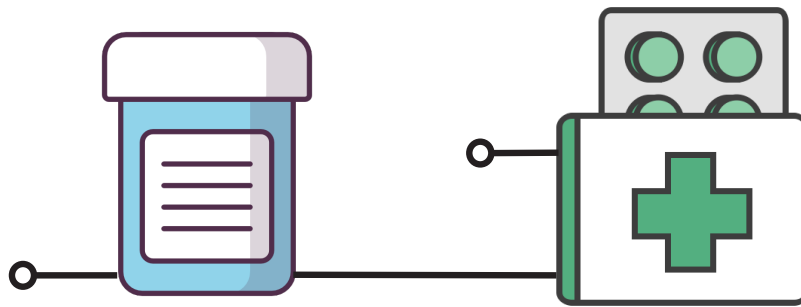


2018 EAHP Survey on Medicines Shortages



MEDICINES SHORTAGES IN IRISH HOSPITALS



- 98% of hospital pharmacists are currently experiencing problems with medicines shortages.
- 88% of hospital pharmacists report that medicines shortages are a daily, sometimes weekly, occurrence.
- 93% of hospital pharmacists agreed, or strongly agreed, that medicines shortages in their hospital are having a negative impact on patient care.

With medicines shortages becoming a growing issue in the pharmaceutical world year after year, the European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP) has conducted a “Medicines Shortages Survey” in 2018 to gather further evidence on the medicines shortage situation in European hospitals. The survey covered 38 countries and amassed a total number of 1,666 responses. 51 responses were obtained from Irish hospital pharmacists. The number of respondents slightly increased compared to the 2014 Medicines Shortages Survey of the EAHP, when 47 responses from Ireland were received.

98% of Irish respondents are currently experiencing problems with medicines shortages

When asked if the shortage of medicines is a current problem in the hospital, especially in terms of delivering the best care for patients, 98% of Irish hospital pharmacists participating in the survey responded with “yes”.

** The numbers in this country report relate to the Irish hospital pharmacists that participated in the 2018 EAHP Medicines Shortage Survey.*

*** The country report uses original quotes provided by survey respondents during the consultation period. These quotes have not been altered.*



In which area of medicines do Irish hospitals experience shortages most commonly?



74% antimicrobial medicines



57% anaesthetic agents



35% preventative medicines



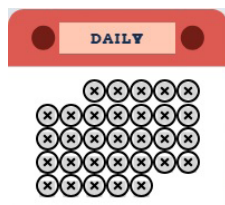
33% emergency medicines



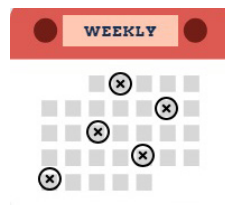
31% cardiovascular medicines

88% of Irish respondents report that medicines shortages are a daily, sometimes weekly, occurrence

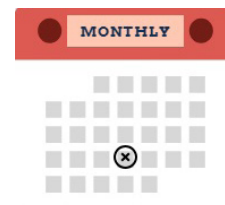
It is important to assess the occurrence of shortages in a timely manner in order to know if shortages for specific medicines come in waves or if they are usually manifest themselves in the hospitals. When asked how often their hospital pharmacies experienced shortages of medicines, 59% (N=30) of respondents replied with “daily”, while 29% (N=15) experienced medicines shortages on a “weekly” basis. In 10% (N=5) of Irish hospital pharmacies shortages are a monthly occurrence. When a shortage is detected hospital pharmacists are working on overcoming it as soon as possible, although the timeframe depends on the nature of the shortage. In Ireland, hospital pharmacists usually overcome the shortages in approximately three months, according to the responses collected in the 2018 EAHP Medicines Shortages Survey.



59% of Irish hospital pharmacists are affected by shortages on a daily basis



29% of Irish hospital pharmacists are affected by shortages on a weekly basis



10% of Irish hospital pharmacists are affected by shortages on a monthly basis

In order to find out the answers to questions on the availability of shortage information in Ireland, respondents were asked if they are aware of a reporting system for shortages being in place on a national level. Those who replied positively were encouraged to provide further feedback on the functionality of the system.

The respondents pointed out that there is a system where hospital pharmacists in Ireland can submit information on shortages, but 63% (N=5) believe that this system is not effective. The Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) is the entity responsible for shortage reporting in Ireland (<https://www.hpra.ie>). The following free text comments were shared by Irish hospital pharmacists on the functionality of the reporting system:

- “Currently there aren’t any but I believe the HPRA are setting some centralised procedure, however, no concrete evidence of its existence yet.”
- “There is very little that I am aware of in Ireland. On occasion we have contacted the Health Product Regulatory Authority only to find out that they were not aware of the shortage.”



93% of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed, that medicines shortages in their hospital are having a negative impact on patient care

In the hospital environment, medicines shortages affect patient care on different levels. The survey took into consideration **budget** and **time**. Results show that, due to shortages, hospital staff is diverted from their usual tasks for up to 5 hours (32% | N=14) or even up to 10 hours (32% | N=14) in an average working week. In the worst case scenario, hospital pharmacy staff must compensate the time lost due to medicines shortages with more than 15 hours per week (14% | N=6). Furthermore, 95% (N=42) of respondents in Ireland agree, or strongly agree, that medicines shortages have a negative impact on the overall hospital budget.

In regard to the steps taken to minimise the negative impact on patient care in Ireland, the survey results showed that in 84% (N=36) of the cases, hospital pharmacists informed the prescriber about the shortage and recommend an alternative medicine. Other actions included attempting to source the medicine from an alternative supplier (84% | N=36), investigating when the supply will be restored and plan accordingly (70% | N=30) or informing the prescriber of a shortage (44% | N=19).

Action from European and national entities is needed to combat the growing threat of medicines shortages and its impact on patient care

When presented with already existing solutions on European level two thirds of the respondents were in favour of the initiatives taken by the European Medicines Agency (EMA), the Heads of Medicines Agency* and the activities of COST Action CA 15105**. The remaining 34% (N=14) of Irish hospital pharmacists marked the answer possibility “none of the above”, when asked which policy solution they personally supported. This can be an indication that a common understanding and awareness of European efforts is present, nonetheless, the room for improvement persists.

Furthermore, 95% (N=39) of the professionals would personally support a greater legal clarity for manufacturers in relation to the need to report a forthcoming disruption of supply. 88% (N=36) requested a more comprehensive database, run by the EMA, listing all medicines shortages linked with advice on how long the shortage may last for and available replacement therapies. Moreover, 83% (N=34) favour annual reporting of the extent of the medicines shortages problem within Europe. A high-level investigation, led by the European Commission, to determine the causes of medicines shortages in Europe (e.g. production issues, pricing impact and parallel trade) and their impact on patient care and healthcare delivery would be supported by 76% (N=31) Irish hospital pharmacists asked.

The following comments were received from respondents in relation to policy options on both national and European level:

- “More needs to be done to investigate the root cause of these shortages. I believe the medicines are available, they are just being funneled to where the manufacturer can make most profit rather than keeping up supply with their regular customers.”
- “At the moment we seem to have no National System in Ireland and we rely on information that is drip-fed from Pharmaceutical Reps. The EU needs to lead on this. Also I have serious concerns on how the EU Falsified Medicines Directive will impact on Ireland, as a peripheral EU English Speaking country in the context of Brexit.”

*Further information on EMA/HMA task force is provided here: <https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/partners-networks/eu-partners/eu-member-states/heads-medicines-agencies>

**More on COST Action CA 15105 can be found here:

http://www.cost.eu/COST_Actions/ca/CA15105

