



Survey Results: Drug Shortage Crisis in Connecticut

Drug shortages have a direct impact on our nation's public health, barring access to critical medications many patients need to be well. Connecticut acutely feels the impact of this growing problem. In a survey conducted by Senator Blumenthal, Connecticut hospitals provided information regarding each of their unique experiences with the drug shortage crisis. This survey examined the frequency of drug shortages at each hospital, the impact on patients in need of drugs in shortage, and the impact on each hospital's operations.

National and State Drug Shortage Trends

Consistent with national figures, data provided to Senator Blumenthal's office from Connecticut Hospitals indicated that from 2008-2009, the number of drug shortages among hospitals surveyed increased by an average of 49.6%. From 2009-2010, this average increased by 76.1%. Below are a few examples of the growing number of shortages in Connecticut hospitals.

Connecticut Children's Medical Center in Hartford:

- 390 manufacturer back order events in 2008
- 400 manufacturer back order events in 2009
- 500 manufacturer back order events in 2010

Hartford Hospital in Hartford:

- 180 drug shortage incidents in 2008
- 210 drug shortage incidents in 2009
- 245 drug shortage incidents in 2010

St. Raphael's Hospital in New Haven:

- 27 drugs in shortage in 2008
- 27 drugs in shortage in 2009
- 33 drugs in shortage in 2010

Stamford Hospital in Stamford:

- 3 drugs in shortage on average per month in 2008
- 8 drugs in shortage on average per month in 2009
- 15-20 drugs in shortage on average per month in 2010

Yale New Haven Hospitals (including data from Greenwich Hospital and Bridgeport Hospital):

- 10 drug shortage incidents in 2008
- 14 drug shortage incidents in 2009
- 32 drug shortage incidents in 2010

Common Drugs in Shortage

The following drugs were reported in shortage by CT hospitals universally in the survey over the time period:

Propofol Injection: Propofol is a generic, general anesthetic used for short diagnostic tests and surgical procedures. This “workhorse” anesthetic has been around for decades, and experienced recurring shortages of different concentrations of the drug.

Emergency Epinephrine Syringes: Epinephrine is the first line drug for patients with asthma attacks, emphysema attacks, cardiac arrest, and allergic reactions. Hospitals, fire departments, emergency providers and doctors need Epinephrine to re-start the heart or open breathing passages due to intense internal swelling.

Acetaminophen Injections: A commonly used pain management medication.

Doxorubicin Liposomal Injection, also known as “Doxil”: A critical chemotherapy drug for ovarian cancer in particular.

Cytarabine: A critical chemotherapy drug, for lung cancers in particular.

Impact of Shortages on Patients and Hospitals

According to hospital survey responses, drug shortages lead patients to commonly experience:

- Delay in patient care
- Use of less effective alternative medications

Hospitals and pharmacies are forced to cope with the increasing number of shortages each year. Connecticut hospitals reported the following impacts:

- Increased labor necessary to find or replace drug therapies
- Increased expenses for buying drugs “off-contract”
- Increased staff education
- Stockpiling of drugs
- Increased expenses for purchasing pricier alternatives
- Hospital workers and pharmacy managers are overworked and stressed

Hospital Testimonials

Memorial Hospital in **Stafford Springs:**

As hospitals and hospital pharmacists, we are most alarmed by the ever increasing volume of medications in short supply; the use of less desirable, often expensive, unfamiliar alternative drugs... if available; the serious potential for errors and poor patient outcomes caused by absent or delayed treatment or preventable adverse drug events associated with alternative drugs or dosage forms...

St. Vincent's Hospital in **Bridgeport**:

St. Vincent's Medical Center, our physicians, nurses, and most importantly our patients have been severely affected by the unprecedented amount of medication shortages and backorders that we as a country are experiencing. Several sources have been quoted as saying this is by far the worst drug shortage climate that they have ever experienced in over 30 years... We receive little to no notice from manufacturers regarding the availability of their products. We are forced to be reactive and not proactive due to the lack of information provided by the drug manufacturers.

Middlesex Hospital in **Middletown**:

...these drug shortages have required significant additional effort to ensure patients are not impacted. The shortages have primarily affected the pharmacy from an operational perspective by requiring decisions to be made (sometimes on a daily basis) to identify alternative drugs for use during patient care... Drug shortages also require technicians to load alternate medication into our pharmacy systems and move drug inventory around the hospital... This presents a significant patient safety concern as the staff occasionally has to substitute different concentrations, strengths, and/or sizes of vials that could be confused which increases the risk of medication administration errors.

