EAHP NEWS

2018 EAHP survey results: the medicines shortages problem continues to persist

Stephanie Kohl

On 7 November, the European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP) released the results of its 2018 Medicines Shortages survey which underline that medicines shortages remain a major problem for patients in European hospitals. In a number of ways, the issues have become more troublesome since the publication of EAHP's last survey results in 2014.

Overall, the 2018 Medicines Shortages survey gathered information on the current nature of the medicines shortages problems in Europe, including their prevalence, the most common types of shortages as well as their impact on patient

care and hospital pharmacy services. In addition, hospital pharmacists were asked about existing national mechanisms for dealing with or monitoring shortages and how they typically manage the problems caused by shortages.

In particular, the percentage of hospital pharmacists reporting shortages to be an issue in terms of delivering the best care to patients has seen a significant increase with 91.8% respondents, compared with 86.2% in 2014 stressing that medicines shortages are a problem faced in their hospital pharmacy. This negative trend was further confirmed by over half of the 1666 surveyed hospital pharmacists who highlighted that they are seeing patient care delays as a consequence of medicines shortages. Antimicrobial agents, preventive and oncology medicines were

reported as the three most common medications in shortage. Many also remarked that reliable communication listing the reasons, estimated durations and other advice to pharmacists, prescribers and patients is still missing. The EAHP consequently calls on national governments and the European Commission to improve the communication on medicines shortages. Only a comprehensive communication strategy on shortages targeting all European states will ensure that all supply chain actors, including hospital pharmacists, receive adequate information on the shortage of medicines in their countries.

Prior to the launch at the Brussels Press Club, EAHP President Petr Horák stated: 'Similar to the findings of the 2014 survey, also the results of this report underline again that medicines shortages are a pan-European problem that cannot be solved through national measures alone. Consequently, the European Commission should gather information on the factors causing medicines shortages and start to provide solutions that will help to solve preventable shortages'.

EAHP thanks Amgen for supporting the realisation of this report and Keele

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University for the analysis of the survey results.

THIRD MEETING OF EAHP'S IMPLEMENTATION AMBASSADORS

From 15 to 17 November, the EAHP held the third EAHP meeting and training of Implementation Ambassadors. Twenty-four ambassadors representing 21 national member associations participated in the event.

Implementation ambassadors are highly motivated and enthusiastic hospital pharmacists that are appointed by their national member association to help their country move towards the implementation of the European Statements of Hospital Pharmacy. Their main role can be summed up as follows:

- ▶ Act as primary link in between EAHP, their national associations and the implementation activities done within their countries.
- ▶ Convey to EAHP the needs and priorities of their countries regarding statement implementation.
- ▶ Build resources that will help hospital pharmacists, healthcare professionals and other relevant stakeholders to implement the statements within their hospitals.

The third meeting of our Implementation Ambassadors was a perfect opportunity to brainstorm and discuss about the next steps of the project, as well as a perfect venue for the group to convey to EAHP their national needs and ideas. The training following the meeting was facilitated by KayHill consultancy. It focused on communication strategies. In particular, Implementation Ambassadors learnt about the best ways to approach stakeholders in order to promote the benefit of implementing the statements for the patient.

EAHP wants to take this opportunity to thank all Implementation Ambassadors for their great work and active participation. Stay tuned for more news on the implementation project!

EAHP SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCHES FIRST SYNERGY MASTERCLASS

On 5th and 6th October, the EAHP organised its very first Synergy Masterclass on Management and Leadership. The event was hosted in Brussels and focused on innovative medicines management strategies, decision-making and individual as well as team development. It was open to hospital pharmacists and other

professionals working the healthcare sector.

The international faculty ensured through a mix between lectures and small working group sessions that the newly learnt techniques could be applied in practice throughout the intensive 2-day training. Open workshop sessions encouraged the group to comment on the practical examples given by the lecturers and to share information about their own management projects in the hospital setting. After the event, participants highlighted that they welcomed the unique opportunity to get acquainted with different management techniques in a very interactive atmosphere.

EAHP's Synergy Masterclasses are Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education accredited 1 or 2 day mini congresses that are focused on the most ground-breaking topics and topics most needed by hospital pharmacists and healthcare professionals. Those that missed this unique opportunity to participate in 2018 should not worry, since the Synergy Masterclasses will continue in 2019. The next event is scheduled for the 4th and 5th October 2019. Professionals that want to hear more about procurement, tendering and decision making processes in the hospital setting should already mark their calendars. During the 2-day training event insights on European Union legislation, procurement and tenders at national, regional and hospital level as well as on the elements of value-based procurement will be shared.

EAHP MEDICINES SHORTAGES SURVEY—ANTIBIOTIC SHORTAGES ON THE RISE

In a number of ways, the issues related to medicines shortages have become more troublesome since the publication of EAHP's last survey results in 2014. The unavailability of certain antimicrobial agents is particularly alarming with 27 out of the 38 participating European countries reporting this area of medicine as the one that is most commonly in shortage in the 2018 Medicines Shortages Survey. When being asked to name the medicines in which the experience of shortages was most frequent during the past year, 272 respondents from 18 different countries mentioned piperacillin/tazobactam. In comparison to the 2014 Medicines Shortages Report, the shortage problem of antimicrobial agents increased by 20%, with now 77% instead of 57% of respondents reporting issues.

Free-text responses by participants indicated that shortages of antibiotics are causing delays of care and therapy in the disease pathway. A hospital pharmacist from Ireland highlighted, for instance, the problems that medicines shortages cause in relation to the prudent use of antibiotics. The unavailability of a narrow spectrum antibiotic could lead to being forced to prescribe a broader spectrum antibiotic which in turn increased the risk of antimicrobial resistance greatly. Other issues highlighted by a Spanish colleague covered the delayed start of antibiotic treatment due to a medicines shortage.

The causes of medicines shortages are multifactorial. They include, but are not limited to problems in production, global consolidation of manufacturing, unintended impacts of pricing and tendering policies, as well as issues within the supply chain. Consequently, medicines shortages cannot be attributed to pharmaceutical companies alone. In particular, the answers to question 7 of the 2018 Medicines Shortages Report indicate that medication shortages are encountered among the various sources of supply (ie, form wholesalers, originator companies, generic companies and 'special' companies) to a similar degree.

As outlined in EAHP's position paper on antimicrobial resistance, the universal access to old antibiotics that are being used in new ways needs to be ensured. In particular, studies that gather further information on this should be supported by the European Union. Consequently, EAHP urges governments to make arrangements that essential antibiotics will be maintained on the market with contingency stock level arrangements and alternative production by hospital pharmacists enabled where necessary.

Section 6: Education and Research

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