

# Alivia Specialty Pharmacy Oncology Drug Shortage Panel

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# Cancer drug shortages – The Issue

- Oncologists have short supplies of platinum-based generic drugs called cisplatin and carboplatin used to treat lung, breast, bladder, ovarian, endometrial, and head and neck cancers.
- Brand-name versions of those drugs are not manufactured anymore and aren't available.
- The platinum shortage has been severe since April 2023, but it has been developing for several months.
- Cisplatin and carboplatin have been the backbone for lung cancer regimens for decades, as they work better than anything else for some cancers.
- There are also shortages with doxorubicin, a critical component of breast cancer, leukemia, and lymphoma treatment; 5-Flourouracil, a treatment for many gastrointestinal cancers; and generic nab-paclitaxel, a commonly used therapy in pancreatic and metastatic breast cancer.
- Most drugs in short supply are older generics that are off-patent and complicated to manufacture.

# Cancer drug shortages – The Issue

- These drugs have extremely thin/low profit margins, and companies are disincentivized from manufacturing them.
- Due to the low margin, just one or two companies are the only manufacturers of certain cancer drugs, with an insufficient ability in their supply chain to accommodate any complication or manufacturing issue.
- When a facility have problems in the manufacturing process, such as contamination, poor quality control or shuts down, the generic drug supply chain of these important products goes to nothing or to critical levels.
- We work everyday with physicians to review their list of patients and the drug supply availability to decide:
  - Are there any other drugs we can reasonably substitute in the patient regimen?
  - Can the treatment be delay or reduce the dose without negatively impacting their outcome of the patient?

## Cancer drug shortages – Impact

- **Increased Drug Costs:** Shortages can drive up the prices of drugs due to supply-demand dynamics. If a drug is in short supply, its price may increase, especially if there's no equivalent substitute available.
- **Higher Expenditure on Alternative Treatments:** If the preferred drug is unavailable, doctors may need to prescribe more expensive alternative drugs or treatments.
- **Increased Operational Costs:** Hospitals and pharmacies often need to invest time and resources to manage drug shortages, such as identifying alternative treatments, adjusting protocols, communicating with patients, and managing inventory. These activities can significantly increase operational costs.
- **Costs of Treatment Delays:** Delays in treatment due to drug shortages can lead to worsened health outcomes, necessitating more intensive and costly treatment down the line. In the case of oncology, these delays can be particularly detrimental.

# Cancer drug shortages – What can be done

- Various strategies can be implemented to mitigate these shortages:
  - **Improved Communication and Transparency:** Manufacturers should report anticipated shortages or production discontinuations to regulatory bodies like the FDA well in advance. This would allow for better coordination and implementation of contingency plans.
  - **Robust Supply Chain Management:** This includes improving the diversification of suppliers, strengthening quality control systems, and implementing backup plans for key components in the manufacturing process.
  - **Regulatory Flexibility:** Regulatory bodies could expedite the approval of alternative drugs or suppliers when a shortage is anticipated or ongoing. This might also include temporary relaxation of import restrictions for certain drugs.
  - **Incentivizing Production:** Economic incentives could be provided to encourage the production of certain critical medications. This might include tax breaks, subsidies, or other financial incentives for companies to manufacture these drugs.

# Cancer drug shortages – What can be done

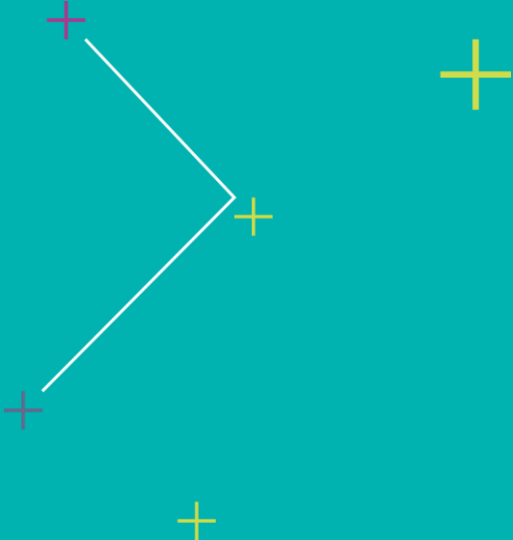
- Various strategies can be implemented to mitigate these shortages:
  - **Greater International Collaboration:** Countries could work together to address drug shortages, through shared production, mutual recognition of regulatory decisions, or other cooperative strategies.
  - **Pricing and Reimbursement Reforms:** Changes in pricing and reimbursement policies could make the production of certain drugs more attractive, ensuring their continued availability.
- While these strategies can help manage drug shortages, each one comes with its own set of complexities and challenges.
- These are systemic issues that require multi-stakeholder engagement, including pharmaceutical companies, healthcare providers, patients, and government agencies.



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