

Oncology Drug Shortages

BACKGROUND:

The Association of Community Cancer Centers (ACCC) continues to be highly concerned about the ongoing shortages of platinum-based chemotherapy agents, such as cisplatin and carboplatin, that are used (individually or in combination) to treat and cure a wide range of cancers, including but not limited to gastric, pancreatic, colorectal, esophageal, cervical, and ovarian.¹ ACCC is also concerned about recent and ongoing shortages of additional medications used to treat patients with cancer.

The shortage of platinum-based therapies was first reported to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on February 10, 2023,² and had a significant impact on patient care in 2023. This included, but was not limited to, delays in treatments for patients, missed treatments, the need to treat patients with second line (often second choice) therapies, non-coverage of such alternative treatments (or delays in coverage determinations), dosage changes, and---very problematically at times---the need to choose among and between patients. Platinum-based chemotherapy shortages have a significant impact on patient care due to their use in a wide range of treatments across tumor types and therapy regimens, and they often lack a therapeutic alternative.³ While the situation has improved with respect to these therapies, the systemic challenges that led to this and other drug shortages have not been solved and therefore could recur.

According to a survey conducted by the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network in September 2023, 1 in 10 cancer patients have been impacted by the drug shortage, creating significant delays in their cancer care.⁴ ACCC members experienced and see the effects of these delays in care, often daily or weekly. For example, patients experienced or feared disease

¹ Association of Community Cancer Centers. ACCC Statement on Chemotherapy Drug Shortages. *Oncology Issues*. 2023;38(4).

² SGO. SGO Statement: Carboplatin and Cisplatin Shortage. Society of Gynecologic Oncology. Published May 24, 2023. Accessed February 9, 2024. <https://www.sgo.org/news/drugshortage/>

³ IQVIA. *Drug Shortages in the U.S. 2023*. IQVIA Institute Report. Published November 15, 2023. Accessed February 8, 2024. <https://www.iqvia.com/-/media/iqvia/pdfs/institute-reports/drug-shortages-in-the-us-2023/drug-shortages-in-the-us-2023.pdf>

⁴ American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. *New Survey: 1 in 10 Cancer Patients Has Been Impacted by Nation's Drug Shortages with Significant Delays to Cancer Care*. Published October 19, 2023. Accessed February 7, 2024. <https://www.fightcancer.org/releases/new-survey-1-10-cancer-patients-has-been-impacted-nation's-drug-shortages-significant>



progression, complications, and extended treatment times. These impacted or could have impacted, not only their quality of life but the length of their lives and the degree to which they might be cured in the long term. ACCC members also had to help patients manage the difficult side effects of therapies used when first-line therapies were not available.

OPPORTUNITY:

Several Congressional committees held hearings in 2023 and 2024 to examine the drug shortages challenge and its root causes. Members of Congress offered several proposed policy solutions through proposed legislation and policy papers, as have experts and stakeholders. It is anticipated that Congressional hearings will continue in 2024, and that Members of Congress, and other policymakers, experts, and stakeholders will continue to weigh in as part of an effort to improve the dire situation sometimes faced by patients with cancer and other serious or chronic illnesses, their families, and the providers who care for them.

ACCC members are working with one another, together with other stakeholders and experts, to develop proposed policy solutions to the drug shortages challenge.

REQUEST:

ACCC asks that Congress use ACCC and its membership as a resource and partner as it evaluates and prioritizes federal legislative efforts to avoid, mitigate, and solve oncology drug shortages. We also request that Congress identify, evaluate, and propose short-term and transparent policies to address future shortages when they occur. Effective short-term policies can directly affect and improve patients' lives and their care when and if such crises occur. Finally, ACCC members recognize that longer term system-wide solutions are required to avert drug shortages in the future. We commit to working with Congress, policymakers, and partners in the public and private sector, to help devise and implement lasting solutions to this serious issue.