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Drug Shortages Result in Rationing Treatments

This problem is widespread and likely to affect you or someone you love.

On January 29, 2016, the New York Times published an alarming report entitled "Drug Shortages Forcing Hard Decisions on Rationing Treatments". "In recent years, shortages of all sorts of drugs - anesthetics, painkillers, antibiotics, cancer treatments - have become the new normal in American medicine. The American Society of Health-System Pharmacists currently lists inadequate supplies of more than 150 drugs and therapeutics, for reasons ranging from manufacturing problems to federal safety crackdowns to drug [manufacturers] abandoning low-profit products. But while such shortages have periodically drawn attention, the rationing that results from them has been largely hidden from patients and the public." Here is a link to the NYT article: <http://nyti.ms/1JMwWGr>

A survey of oncologists conducted in 2012 and 2013 showed 83% of doctors who regularly prescribed cancer drugs reported having been unable to provide the preferred chemotherapy agent at least once during the previous six months. More than a third of them said they had to delay treatment "and make difficult choices about which patients to exclude," according to a letter published in The New England Journal of Medicine.

In the past several years, with no requirement for giving notice, drug companies have opted to stop production of life-saving medications such as sodium bicarbonate injections that are part of standard resuscitation protocols. Even common intravenous solutions have been unavailable. These shortages occur as drug manufacturers turn their focus toward money instead of patient care, and shift their production lines to higher priced, more profitable drugs. These publicly held companies point to the responsibility to provide returns

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to their investors.

When shortages occur, doctors sometimes need to make the difficult choice to switch to a different medication, perhaps one that is less effective or has more side effects. Sadly, during this time, symptoms can reoccur or diseases can progress.

Compounding pharmacies often are called upon regularly by hospitals, veterinarians, and health care providers in private practice to help during medication shortages. As long as the unavailable drug has been removed from the market for a reason such as declining usage or low profitability but not due to safety concerns, compounders can obtain the active ingredient from an FDA-inspected chemical provider and use it to prepare the needed medication.

If a medication that you need is commercially unavailable, contact our compounding pharmacist. We are happy to answer your questions and work together with patients and practitioners to solve medication problems.

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We care about our patients and want to provide you with quality information about your health. If you ever have questions or would like more information, please feel free to ask. We look forward to caring for you and your family.

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