



# Addressing America's Drug Shortage Crisis

Severe and critical drug shortages continue to jeopardize patient care in the United States, resulting in delayed treatment, serious harm to patients, and unnecessary healthcare costs. Healthcare organizations, including hospitals, health systems, and clinics, often struggle to obtain medications, some of which are essential to maintain basic levels of patient care.

## The Issue

- **265** active drug shortages<sup>1</sup>
- **126** new shortages in 2019, with 46 reported in Q3 alone<sup>2</sup>
- **8+ years** — longest duration of active shortages<sup>3</sup>

### Top 5 Drug Classes for Ongoing Drug Shortages<sup>4</sup>

- antimicrobials
- chemotherapy
- cardiovascular medications
- central nervous system medications (including injectable opioids)
- fluid, electrolyte, and nutrition medications

## The Impact

- **Delayed or Limited Treatment Options:** Drug shortages often result in delays in needed treatments and potentially less than optimal patient outcomes. The threat is aggravated in situations where there are no alternative therapies available, like the recent shortage of vincristine injection, a commonly used chemotherapy drug used to treat many cancers, particularly in pediatric patients.
- **Patient Safety Issues:** Drug shortages threaten the quality of patient care and result in medication errors, patient harm, and even death. Just one shortage of norepinephrine, a drug used to treat septic shock, was correlated with an increase in patient deaths.<sup>5</sup>
- **Substantial Healthcare Costs and Operational Concerns:** Drug shortages add time and expense as providers search for therapeutic alternatives and manage supplies, adding \$230 million<sup>6</sup> a year to U.S. drug costs and \$216 million a year<sup>7</sup> in increased labor costs.

## The Mitigating Emergency Drug Shortages (MEDS) Act (S.2723) Includes Key Priorities to Reduce Drug Shortages

- Strengthens requirements to disclose causes and expected duration of shortages
- Extends reporting requirements to include active pharmaceutical ingredients
- Requires manufacturers have contingency plans for supply disruptions
- Develops recommendations to incentivize manufacturers to manufacture drugs in shortage
- Examines the national security risks of shortages

<sup>1</sup> ASHP, "National Drug Shortages: Active Drug Shortages by Quarter," Sept. 30, 2019

<sup>2</sup> ASHP, "National Drug Shortages: Active Drug Shortages by Quarter," Sept. 30, 2019

<sup>3</sup> FDA Website, Longest Individual FDA Drug Shortages by Total Duration, Aug. 15, 2000 to Sept. 5, 2018

<sup>4</sup> ASHP, "National Drug Shortages: Active Drug Shortages by Quarter," Sept. 30, 2019

<sup>5</sup> JAMA, Association Between U.S. Norepinephrine Shortage and Mortality Among Patients With Septic Shock, Apr. 11, 2017

<sup>6</sup> *Annals of Internal Medicine*, Changes in Drug Pricing After Drug Shortages in the U.S., Jan. 1, 2019

<sup>7</sup> *American Journal of Health-System Pharmacists*, Impact of Drug Shortages on U.S. Health Systems, Oct. 1, 2011