

Drug Shortages Elevator Speech

Suggested Talking Points

Introduce yourself: Hi, my name is (insert name) and I am currently a (insert position) at (insert workplace or school) in (insert city, state).

1. Why do drug shortages happen?

- a. While medication supply and availability may vary between institutions during a drug shortage, the impact on healthcare and patients create more widespread problems, often affecting the entire drug market.
- b. Drug shortages occur for many reasons such as manufacturing or quality issues, delays in acquiring raw materials, supply chain issues, or a decision to discontinue production.

2. How do drug shortages impact patient care?

- a. Drug shortages have the potential to cause patient harm, including:
 - i. Posing a barrier to provide optimal medication therapy to patients in need or delaying treatment.
 - ii. For example, we may know that drug X is the most effective for a given condition, but must use alternative therapies (e.g., drug Y) or potentially no drug at all due to limited supply of the preferred agent (e.g., drug X.)
 - iii. Risk of medication error is increased as changes are made to normal workflow and staff may be less familiar with alternative medication nuances including preparation, handling, dosing, dispensing, and administering.
- b. Drug shortages can lead to increased healthcare costs.
 - i. Changes must be made to health system workflow and computer systems to reflect changes.
 - ii. For example, it may seem simple to switch out one product for another, but to ensure quality and patient safety, many components go into each change. Some of these may include new logic and barcode scanning added to the electronic health record, staff awareness of alternative therapies, updated dispensing procedures, and alternative purchasing strategies.
 - iii. In worst case scenarios, alternative therapy may not be as effective or carry different risk of adverse reactions, leading to potential treatment complications, diminished patient outcomes, and increased healthcare utilization
- c. Share a personal example about how drug shortages impact your work.
 - i. Example: IV fluids – forced to switch several medications to IV push, this required changing dispensing and administration procedures
 - ii. Example: Cisplatin – A shortage of a critical chemotherapy drug forced healthcare teams to prioritize which patients will get the life-saving therapy and when, potentially leaving others with delays in treatment or less preferred medication regimens.

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3. What is the solution to this problem?

- a. Pharmacists work to identify alternative medications and alter prescribing practices where possible. This is done at the institutional, regional, and national level to leverage organizational support to mitigate the impact of drug shortages.
- b. ASHP Drug Resource center provides assistance to hospital pharmacies impacted by drug shortages. <https://www.ashp.org/Drug-Shortages>
 - i. Download and print ASHP Drug Shortages Infographic to share with representatives and their staff members
- c. ASHP is advocating for a requirement that manufacturers must provide more information and increased transparency regarding the cause and expected duration of drug shortages.¹

I appreciate you taking the time to speak with me today. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have (exchange contact information).

Remember:

- Stick to plain language that doesn't require healthcare or pharmacy background.
- Keep it short (60-90 seconds).
- Answer any questions and provide feedback/additional info as needed.
- Always follow up with a thank you.

References:

1. [Recommendations-Drug-Shortages-as-Matter-of-Natl-Security.pdf \(ashp.org\)](#)

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