

Minimize the Impact of Drug Shortages

Drug shortages will continue to challenge pharmacies and patients...especially as we grapple with COVID-19. The laundry list of products includes hydroxychloroquine...albuterol inhalers...acetaminophen...thermometers...etc. Expect more to run short as the pandemic persists...due to manufacturing issues, increased demand, panic buying, etc.

Follow these tips to help ease the sting of shortages.

Regularly review shortage lists from your distributors, FDA, and Am Soc of Health-System Pharmacists. These provide current info on shortages, including affected NDCs and expected resupply dates.

Promptly communicate details of a shortage with your team, patients, and prescribers...and provide solutions.

For instance, look for another strength or dosage form...contact another pharmacy...or find a different med. Use our charts to compare options within a med class and recommend alternatives.

Educate your techs when a DAW or payer override code may be tried...such as DAW 8 for a brand if there's a marketplace shortage of a generic...and document details on the Rx.

Run usage reports for Rx's in short supply...and consider allocating these meds for patients with refills. For example, some pharmacies are prioritizing hydroxychloroquine for lupus or rheumatoid arthritis.

Don't hoard if you're able to get a med that's on shortage...order just what you need so others can get stock too.

Work as a team to adjust overall inventory if needed...especially if you're dispensing more 90-day Rx's in light of COVID-19. But explain you may need to limit Rx's to 30 days for shorted meds.

Inform patients of any med changes due to a shortage...and retrain on proper use. For example, ask patients to "teach back" how to use their albuterol inhaler...so they get the most benefit.

See our resource, *Drug Shortages: A Stepwise Approach*, for a guide to navigating supply issues.

Key References:

- www.fda.gov/drugs/drug-safety-and-availability/drug-shortages (4-27-20)
- www.fda.gov/drugs/drug-shortages/report-drug-shortages-root-causes-and-potential-solutions (4-27-20)
- www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/public-health/joint-statement-ordering-prescribing-or-dispensing-covid-19 (4-27-20)
- www.ashp.org/Drug-Shortages/Current-Shortages (4-27-20)

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