



American Medical Group Association

The Best Medicine *in* America.
The Best Medicine *for* America.

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Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building, 200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
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Madam Secretary:

We have all read with dismay about the shortages of critical prescription drugs and medicines in recent times. Just a few days ago, several members of my organization, the American Medical Group Association (AMGA), contacted me about problems their physicians are encountering in treating gravely ill patients, specifically cancer victims. These shortages are affecting real people right now, sometimes putting their lives at risk.

AMGA represents multi-specialty medical groups and other organized systems of care, including some of the nation's largest, most prestigious integrated health care delivery systems. AMGA represents the interests of 400 such groups and systems that employ approximately 113,000 physicians who provide services to an estimated 110 million patients nationwide.

Drug shortages in hospitals and health systems cause significant disruptions in patient care. The medications in question are often life-saving drugs, or used to relieve pain, to treat serious infections, and many other conditions. Specifically, we have heard from members throughout the country about their difficulties in obtaining the drug cytarabine, but similar problems exist for cisplatin, daunorubicin, dexamethasone, doxorubicin, etoposide, leucovorin, levoleucovorin, and vincristine used in cancer treatments for extremely ill, often dying patients. There are also numerous other drug shortages.

The causes of the shortages are multifaceted and solutions suggested by many experts in the field are equally wide-ranging. A long term solution is necessary, but until that can be found, there must be a more effective and efficient emergency response capability. The existing exceptions process to allow expedited FDA actions on a case-by-case basis seems complex and responsibilities are split between several offices. Surely this could be streamlined.

I therefore strongly urge you exercise the full power of your office to take measures necessary to solve these drug shortages as expeditiously as possible, with short-term emphasis on smoothly and quickly addressing life threatening situations.

Sincerely,

Donald W. Fisher, PhD, CAE
President and CEO – AMGA

cc: Margaret Hamburg, MD, FDA Commissioner