DRUG AND SUPPLY SHORTAGES

Please consider ways to address drug and supply shortages facing healthcare providers.

Background

- As the surgical branch of dentistry – and the bridge to medical colleagues – oral and maxillofacial surgeons (OMSs) provide vital services that are urgent, emergent and outpatient.
- OMSs are particularly prone to pharmaceutical and supply shortages, including personal protective equipment (PPE), given their unique skillset and largely independent practice status.
- OMSs need access to – but have experienced shortages of – the following pharmacologics: anesthetics, analgesics, antibiotics, antiemetics, emergency medications (epinephrine, ephedrine, glycopyrrolate, atropine, adenosine, etc.) and saline, just to name a few. Drug shortages have been an ongoing challenge despite past congressional efforts to address the issue.
- The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated drug supply chain problems and produced significant shortages of medical supplies that paralyzed the U.S. healthcare system. OMSs and many providers outside large hospital systems struggled to obtain proper PPE at the height of the pandemic. And where PPE was available, prices were exorbitant.
- When medications or PPE are unavailable – or available only at substantially elevated prices, as is typical during shortage periods – OMSs cannot offer the typical high level of care and access to treatment, significantly impacting the healthcare system.

Possible solutions

- AAOMS urges the following to address drug shortages:
  - Additional coordination between the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Justice to address controlled substances in short supply, including increasing production quotas and removing regulations to allow manufacturers to adapt to market shifts.
  - Mechanisms for the federal government to incentivize manufacturers to produce critical drugs – which often have a small profit margin – while investing in quality management to ensure their extensive and consistent availability.
  - A congressional study on the impact of a nonprofit to assist office-based professionals in securing pharmacologics similar to programs serving several hospital systems.
- AAOMS urges the following to address PPE shortages:
  - Recognition by all levels of government of OMSs as essential frontline providers and fair allocation of PPE during national shortage periods so emergent cases may continue to receive treatment outside hospital emergency rooms.
  - National efforts to secure the supply chain by incentivizing domestic manufacturing and developing an early notification system for supply shortages similar to the FDA pharmaceutical program.
  - Empower Attorneys General and their relevant agencies to go after unscrupulous vendors who price gouge during critical events, such as national pandemics.