Nationwide Drug Shortage Could Cause Disruptions for Cancer Patients in Active Treatment

Statement from American Cancer Society and ACS CAN CEO Karen. E. Knudsen

WASHINGTON, D.C. – May 12, 2023 – Chemotherapy drugs used to treat cancer are increasingly in short supply and have returned to the list of top-five drug classes affected by shortage. Expanded demand, supply shortages, limited manufacturing capacity, and low profit margins for generic therapies are among the factors resulting in the current nationwide shortage.

The following is a statement from American Cancer Society and American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network CEO Karen E. Knudsen, MBA, PhD.

“The shortage of certain cancer drugs has become a serious and life-threatening issue for cancer patients across the country. The American Cancer Society (ACS) and its advocacy affiliate, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) have heard from patients and practitioners who are directly experiencing the impact of these shortages.

“A number of the drugs included in the shortage don’t have an effective alternative. As first-line treatments for a number of cancers, including triple-negative breast cancer, ovarian cancer and leukemia often experienced by pediatric cancer patients, the shortage could lead to delays in treatment that could result in worse outcomes.

“The Food and Drug Agency (FDA)’s drug shortage mitigation tools are largely confined to working directly with the manufacturer on whatever is causing the shortage, as well as working with other manufacturers of the same product to urge them to ramp up production. This ‘early warning’ approach makes up essentially all of the toolbox at their disposal.

“Both ACS and ACS CAN continue to monitor and actively engage in the medical product shortage issue as part of our mission to improve the lives of people with cancer and their families. ACS is communicating with health systems nationwide and talking directly to patients who call the American Cancer Society National Cancer Information Center (NCIC). ACS CAN is urging Congress to look at longer-term solutions that change the fundamental underpinnings of the shortages. In the meantime, we urge the industry to work with medical practitioners to help identify alternatives where possible to ensure that cancer patients’ treatments are not delayed.”

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About the American Cancer Society
The American Cancer Society is a leading cancer-fighting organization with a vision to end cancer as we know it, for everyone. For more than 100 years, we have been improving the lives of people with cancer and their families as the only organization combating cancer through advocacy, research, and patient support. We are committed to ensuring everyone has an opportunity to prevent, detect, treat, and survive cancer. To learn more, visit cancer.org or call our 24/7 helpline at 1-800-227-2345. Connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

About ACS CAN

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) advocates for evidence-based public policies to reduce the cancer burden for everyone. We engage our volunteers across the country to make their voices heard by policymakers at every level of government. We believe everyone should have a fair and just opportunity to prevent, detect, treat, and survive cancer. Since 2001, as the American Cancer Society’s nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate, ACS CAN has successfully advocated for billions of dollars in cancer research funding, expanded access to quality affordable health care, and advanced proven tobacco control measures. We stand

with our volunteers, working to make cancer a top priority for policymakers in cities, states and our nation's capital. Join the fight by visiting www.fightcancer.org.