

**Ministry of Health
and Long-Term Care**

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**Ministère de la Santé
et des Soins de longue durée**

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March 20, 2012

MEMORANDUM TO: Health Care Providers

FROM: Gerilynnne Carroll
Director, Emergency Management Branch

RE: Ministry Update on the Sandoz Canada Inc. Drug Shortage Issue

The following information is intended for health care providers, including pharmacists, who work with injectable medications that are impacted by the production slow down by Sandoz Canada Inc.

Highlights

- Health care providers nationally are experiencing a reduction in the supply of certain injectable medications supplied by Sandoz.
- The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has developed a five-point Ministry Action Plan to guide the provincial response.
- Guidelines to support ethical decision making in redistribution of medication and service modification are now available.

Status Update

Sandoz Canada Inc. has announced a production slow down at its plant in Boucherville, Quebec. Sandoz Canada is the main manufacturer of many injectable products, 40 percent of which are not made by any other manufacturer in Canada. A list of Sandoz medications and product supply information is available to regulated health professionals on the [Sandoz](#) website.

As a result of this unexpected disruption, health care providers are experiencing a reduction in the supply of certain injectable drugs. Some of these medications have no available therapeutic alternatives.

The Health System Response

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (ministry) is working with its health care partners including group purchasing organizations, and federal, provincial and territorial partners to monitor and respond to this evolving situation.

The ministry has developed a five-point Ministry Action Plan that includes health care system strategies for inventory/ impact assessment, inventory management, facilitated procurement, modification of services, and communications.

A. Inventory/ Impact Assessment

To track the inventory of Sandoz drug products, hospitals in Ontario are reporting to the ministry daily based on predefined triggers (5 day or less supply – critical supply; 6-14 day supply – level of concern). Community-based organizations from the long-term care, home care, hospice and palliative care sectors are submitting critical medication inventory information through their provincial associations to the ministry as shortages are identified.

Through the weekly updates on the Sandoz website, the ministry is able to track current and future plans for increasing allocations for critical drugs and to compare this data with inventory data. This information will enable the ministry to support health care organizations and Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) to develop appropriate action plans.

B. Inventory Management

Some of the medications that are in short supply may be sourced elsewhere; however many are sole source from Sandoz, necessitating action to prevent critical shortages and negative effects on patient care. Actions that health care providers may take to conserve supply include:

- Developing an inventory of available drugs across care settings based on available supply and criticality of need and/or demand to facilitate redistribution
- Reviewing current drug prescribing practices based on available evidence of clinical efficacy
- Reducing wastage of drugs (e.g., where evidence does not support or is weak for clinical efficacy and where it can be done safely)
- Using therapeutic alternatives where evidence suggests similar clinical efficacy to the drug in short supply
- Using lower dosages where evidence suggests similar clinical efficacy to the drug in short supply
- Reassessing patient medical need on an ongoing basis and adjusting drug dosing
- Delaying enrolment in research studies using drugs in short supply

To ensure patient safety, health care providers are encouraged to consult with their colleagues, including pharmacists, on the strategies to conserve supply; particularly regarding therapeutic alternatives and lower doses. Hospital pharmacists whose hospitals provide a drug information service may want to consult with this service. Pharmacists whose organizations are members of a regional Drug Information Centre may consult with their service.

[Drug Information and Research Centre](#) (416) 385-3472 or 1-800-268-8058

[LonDIS](#) (519) 685-8500 x 32619

[MetroDIS](#) (416) 480-4514 or 1-888-718-5706

[OVRDIS](#) (613) 737-8347 or 1-800-267-4707

Drug Information Centres can provide information on drug availability/ identification, therapeutic uses of drugs, method of drug administration, drugs in pregnancy and lactation, adverse effects of drugs, precautions/ contraindications of drug use, drug interactions, pharmacokinetics, drug stability, formulary issues and other drug-related topics.

The Ministry has endorsed the *Ethical Framework for Resource Allocation during the Drug Supply Shortage* (see the attached document) to provide ethical guidelines for decision-making regarding redistribution of drug supplies based on need. This guidance has been developed to assist with decision making for health care providers, organizations, LHINs and the ministry.

Currently, shortages are being dealt with through the redistribution of medication and in some cases, exchanges of medications. The LHINs are in the process of developing a timely communication process within their region in order to coordinate re-distribution of medication if needed. A small working group is establishing the protocol for the LHIN facilitation role.

C. Facilitation of Procurement

In order to identify alternate drug supplies in a coordinated manner, the ministry is working with the provincial group purchasing organizations to support their procurement activities and strategies. In addition, the ministry is maintaining ongoing communication with its provincial counterparts to align efforts in this regard. Finally the ministry is communicating with the federal government to ensure that Ontario's priorities are being addressed through the fast tracking of new drug licensing applications.

Through the weekly updates on the Sandoz website, the ministry is able to track current and future plans for increasing allocations for critical drugs.

D. Modification of Service

When inventory management strategies are not sufficient to meet the need for drugs in short supply, services may need to be modified. The *Ethical Framework for*

Resource Allocation during the Drug Supply Shortage provides ethical guidelines for decision-making regarding modification of service for organizations.

Health care providers are encouraged to consult with their appropriate regulatory body for guidance on the operationalization of these guidelines. This guidance also requires clinical judgment in application to specific patient scenarios.

E. Communications

The ministry will continue to work with LHINs and provincial associations, as well as maintain a website for health care providers, for the duration of this drug shortage. The provider website will be made available in the next couple of days, and will provide additional information.

Individual health care organizations may wish to contact their provincial associations with any concerns or questions.

Health care providers can call the ministry's Health Care Provider Hotline toll-free at 1-866-212-2272 if they have any questions or concerns. Note that this hotline is intended to provide guidance and support to health care providers and is not a service to provide general information to the public.

Members of the public who have questions about the drug shortages can contact Service Ontario at 1-866-532-3161.

Yours truly,

Original signed by

Gerilynnne Carroll
Director, Emergency Management Branch

Attachment

- c: Alex Bezzina, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health System Accountability & Performance Division
- Kevin Finnerty, Assistant Deputy Minister, Communications and Information Branch
- Diane McArthur, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ontario Public Drug Programs Division