

Pediatric Cancer Drug Shortages



Nearly **16,000** children in the United States are diagnosed with cancer each year.

Cancer remains the **most common** cause of death by disease among children in the United States.

1 in 5 children diagnosed with cancer in the United States **will not survive** their diagnosis.

Drug shortages significantly impact children with cancer and the health care professionals who care for them. Unfortunately, shortages of life-saving and life-extending drugs in pediatric cancer care - many of which are also used in adult care - occur often, affecting treatment timing, treatment protocols used, health outcomes, and costs to the healthcare system.

"There was not an alternative, so I just had to miss doses."

Key Survey Findings

- **More than 80%** of health providers and researchers surveyed reported that their institution is **currently experiencing a shortage** of at least one drug used to treat cancer in children.
- **More than half** of childhood cancer patients, survivors, caregivers, and/or family members reported that a life-saving drug experienced a shortage or became unavailable during treatment.
- **Nearly 20%** of patients, survivors, caregivers, and/or family members reported **delays in treatment** due to the unavailability of a necessary drug.

The Alliance for Childhood Cancer developed a survey for health care providers and families to share their experiences with drug shortages in childhood cancer care. Survey data was collected from 184 participants (114 health care providers and researchers; 70 childhood cancer patients, survivors, caregivers, and/or family members) between May and June 2023.

"We had to self-source the drugs on our own, out-of-pocket."

Institutions respond to oncology drug shortages differently. Some institutions develop and implement clear plans for managing shortages and how to prioritize patients while some manage drug shortages on a case-by-case basis. Regardless, all struggle to ensure that childhood cancer patients receive the care when they need it and that families are aware of ongoing challenges.

Members of the Alliance also compiled data on 21 of the most commonly used life-saving and life-extending generic chemotherapies for children with cancer. This analysis covers 17 different cancers and these drugs have inadequate or no substitutes.

Based on this analysis, the estimated cost to provide every needed dose of each of these medications over the span of one year is \$100 million.

Hospitals and Clinics
Across the U.S. Spend



\$57 Billion

Each Year on Cancer Drugs.



The Money Needed to Meet the
Needs of Kids with Cancer is



Just \$100 Million.

Many of these drugs – including carboplatin, cisplatin, and methotrexate – are low cost, with quite a few costing \$1 or less per vial. These drugs are frequently in short supply due to small cost margins. The same group of low-cost drugs are used to treat most childhood cancers, making shortages especially devastating.

Quotes From Providers and Researchers:

“This is causing us to use treatment regimens in a data free zone and essentially ration for patients who need it the most. It is an ethical dilemma.”

“These shortages undermine trust in the medical system and compromise outcomes.”

“We are constantly having to revisit shortages over the past 5+ years, however 2023 is by far the worst year we’ve seen to-date for oncology shortages.”