



IOWA ONCOLOGY SOCIETY

January 19, 2011

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State Capitol Building
East 12th and Grand
Des Moines, IA 50319

Dear Sir or Madam:

On behalf of the Iowa Oncology Society (IOS), a non-profit organization that represents the practice of oncology and promotes excellence in cancer care in our State, I am writing to make you aware of a major threat to patient access to vital cancer medications. Currently, there are a number of chemotherapeutics and other oncology supportive care drugs that are in short supply in Iowa and across the country. Many of these therapies are an integral part of standard treatments for certain types of cancer and without them, patients are unable to get the treatments they need that are recommended in the regimens for their specific diseases.

The list of drugs undergoing a supply shortage is long, but in oncology we are most concerned with shortages of the following therapies: **Leucovorin, Doxorubicin, Vincristine, Etoposide, Cisplatin, and Cytarabine.**

In some cases, the manufacturer has informed us that more drugs will become available at some point in 2011. In others, no timeline is given for availability. Other shortages can be viewed at <http://www.fda.gov/drugs/drugsafety/drugshortages/ucm050792.htm>.

In addition to patients not having access to their prescribed therapies, providers are increasingly frustrated by not knowing the reasons for and length of these supply delays. With uncertainty, providers are left to ration or otherwise limit the use of certain recommended therapies. IOS is concerned for cancer patients in Iowa who are not able to receive the best treatments possible.

These continued delays are a threat to quality cancer care in Iowa, and we request your help in this matter.

We are communicating our concerns to the manufacturers and distributors of these drugs to tell them of the Society's collective concerns. Unfortunately, the individual efforts of our Iowa practices to procure more products or obtain more information about what is causing the delays have not been successful. We are aware that an attempt to introduce legislation in Iowa may be time-consuming, and that, even if passed, would only pertain to certain plans within Iowa.

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Therefore, we would be interested in any other assistance your office or the Iowa General Assembly might be able to offer, including letters on behalf of the people of Iowa to manufacturers, distributors, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, which is monitoring these shortages. We also are sharing our concerns with Iowa's representatives to the U.S. Congress.

Any assistance you may be able to provide us will be greatly appreciated. Please feel free to contact me for more information or with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Joe J. Merchant, MD
President, Iowa Oncology Society

cc: Teva Pharmaceuticals; Attn: Leucovorin/Doxorubicin/Vincristine/Etoposide/Cisplatin Department; Jeffrey Herzfield, Senior VP and General Manager, Teva Health Systems; 1090 Horsham Road; PO #1090; North Wales, PA 19454

Hospira Pharmaceuticals; Christopher B. Begley, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer; 275 North Field Drive; Lake Forest, Illinois 60045

APP Pharmaceuticals; John Ducker, Chief Executive Officer and President; 1501 East Woodfield Road, Suite 300 East; Schaumburg, IL 60173-5837

David Gaugh, VP and General Manager of Bedford Labs; 300 Northfield Road; Bedford, OH 44146

LCDR Valerie Jensen; Drug Shortage Project Manager; Center for Drug Evaluation and Research; Food and Drug Administration; 5600 Fishers Lane; Rockville, MD 20857

Mark J. Goldberger, MD, MPH; Drug Shortage Coordinator; Center for Drug Evaluation and Research; Food and Drug Administration; 5600 Fishers Lane; Rockville, MD 20857

The Honorable Tom Harkin
The Honorable Chuck Grassley
The Honorable Bruce L. Braley
The Honorable David Loebsack
The Honorable Leonard Boswell
The Honorable Tom Latham
The Honorable Steve King