

DRUG SHORTAGES IN CANCER CARE

A summary of ASCO and Drug Shortages Canada guidance in navigating drug shortages in Oncology

References:

- a. Edgardo S. Santos et al., Drug Shortages in Oncology: ASCO Clinical Guidance for Alternative Treatments. *JCO Oncol Pract* 20, 19-32(2024). DOI:10.1200/OP.23.00545
- b. Drug Shortages Canada
- c. MSSC - Drug Shortages Canada (2017) *Multi-Stakeholder Toolkit* Available at: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/https://www.drugshortagescanada.ca/files/MSSC_Toolkit_2017.pdf (Accessed: 29 April 2024)

General principles to consider when navigating limited supplies of oncology drugs



Reprioritize nonessential use, and identify alternative drugs, interventions, and/or sequencing with comparable efficacy and safety



Increase the interval between cycles and/or reduce the total treatment dose when clinically acceptable



Minimize or omit the impacted oncology drug for recurrent cancers that are drug-resistant



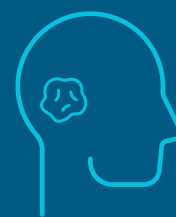
Optimize drug usage through selection of vial size, dose rounding/banding, and using multiuse vials where available

Some practical tips specific to oncology pharmacy practice



BREAST CANCERS

- For some carboplatin-containing regimens, carboplatin may be started at a modified dose AUC of 1 (weekly), which is preferred, or AUC of 4 (once every 3 weeks)
- Consider prioritizing carboplatin for patients whose tumors have not responded well to AC (doxorubicin and cyclophosphamide) and pembrolizumab



HEAD AND NECK CANCERS

- Platinum agents (and cisplatin specifically) play a major role, for which there are no equally efficacious substitutions, therefore these patients should be prioritized for platinum agent access
- Carboplatin and 5-FU for concurrent chemoradiation may be considered where carboplatin is more readily available than cisplatin



GI CANCERS

- Fluoropyrimidines 5-FU or capecitabine may be reasonably substituted for one another when shortages occur
- Platinum agents (oxaliplatin, carboplatin, or cisplatin) may reasonably be substituted for one another in some settings



LUNG CANCERS

- Platinum agents play a major role, for which there are no equally efficacious substitutions, therefore these patients should be prioritized for platinum agent access
- Immunotherapy alone or with limited chemotherapy is an alternative in the presence of chemotherapy-related drug shortages when immunotherapy options are funded

Additional guidance can be found through the following resources

1

DRUG SHORTAGES IN ONCOLOGY: ASCO Clinical Guidance of Alternative Treatments

- Provides an overview of general principles for navigating shortages
- Provides disease site specific guidance on alternative treatment plans

2

DRUG SHORTAGES CANADA: Website

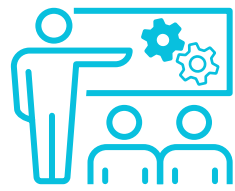
- Contains a searchable database of shortage and discontinued reports
- Contains resources and guidance documents on reporting and navigating shortages

3

DRUG SHORTAGES CANADA: Multi-stakeholder Toolkit

- Provides an overview of the drug supply chain and key players
- Provides strategies and tools for managing drug shortages

1 Additional general principles



- Establish internal task force to monitor for drug shortages and lead policy creation on utilization



- Identify an evidence-based alternative regimen if adequate supplies are unavailable



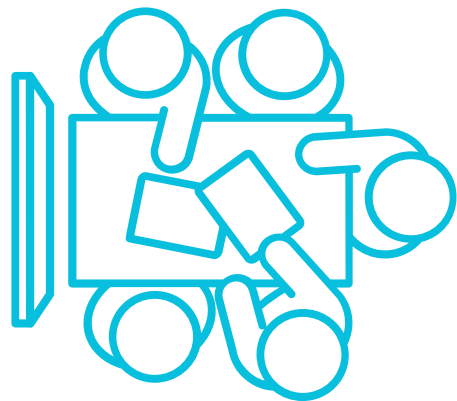
- Offer counseling referrals to patients affected by shortage-related distress



- Offer support services to clinicians affected by shortage-related distress



2 Pharmacy team members have an essential role to play in navigating drug shortages



- Support internal formulary decisions, and provide drug information and education of drug shortage impact to healthcare team
- Educate patients about their treatment plan and the shortage impact, and provide patient-centered care through collaboration with the healthcare team
- Develop drug policies and procedures on medication procurement and use, oversee the drug distribution and safe handling from point of entry to the patient
- Consult with stakeholders to identify conservation strategies and/or alternative drug treatments for patients, including redistribution to areas of greatest need