

The supply shortage solution



By Leslie Morgan

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Ever since I've been involved in the pharmaceutical world, there have been supply shortages when it comes to obtaining products. The problem can sometimes be traced back to the fact that two companies have merged, a raw material is in short supply or a market may have experienced a product recall.

Regardless of the reasons why something is unavailable, when you need a product that you routinely buy and your local wholesaler can't help you, what other option do you have?

In the short term, you can contact other local wholesalers or hospitals, which may have excess stock that they can sell on to you. Or, you can find an equivalent product in the marketplace until stocks of your preferred brand or dosage are back in good supply.

But if you are unable to source the product locally, there are no equivalents on the market or the shortage turns out to be a long term problem, then what else can you do?

The obvious answer is to search abroad. But that option is far from simple. You might wonder, where do I start? Europe? The USA? If the product can be sourced from Europe, how will I be able to explain exactly what I need in French, German or Italian? Also, if I pay in advance, how can I be certain that I will ever receive the product?

And, once you've placed your order, the next question is, how will you transport it home? Is the safest and most

cost-effective option a courier, scheduled airline, road transportation, shipping company or a combination of the above? Your choice of transportation will determine the cost and speed at which your medicine arrives and it's worth bearing in mind that next-day delivery can be up to 40% more expensive. Also, how will you be sure that your product will be stored securely and at the right temperature? And will customs officials put a hold on the order because customs documentation hasn't been filled out properly?

Once the product actually arrives, you then need to check its authenticity, provenance and shelf-life. Finally, you need to get a good-quality translation if the original is in a foreign language.

Overall, there's a lot to consider. You've got to ask, is it a wise use of a busy healthcare professional's time and skill to fill out endless paper work and forms?

The answer to that question is most definitely 'no'! But, the good news is that there's a really reliable and cost-effective alternative. Durbin PLC specialises in importing these products

for you. We are experts in importing and exporting supply shortage medicines.

For example, one of our own label products Yutopar (Ritodrine Hydrochloride) – prescribed to arrest pre-term labour between 24 and 33 weeks of gestation in patients with no medical or obstetric contra-indication to tocolytic therapy – had a temporary supply problem recently. We found an equivalent product for the duration of the shortage, and ensured that supply to hospitals was not affected. Shortage over, I'm pleased to report that the product is now back in stock. We managed to plug the gap and, chances are, most hospital pharmacists who order that product, wouldn't have even realised that there could have been a potential problem.

Remember, all it takes is one phone call, fax, email or web enquiry and it's done. The drug is located, transported and delivered directly to your hospital or wholesaler on the exact day you specify. The bottom line is that it's infinitely easier, quicker, safer and more cost-effective than doing it all yourself. ■

Durbin PLC is a British company based in South Harrow, London. Established in 1963, the company specialises in supplying quality assured pharmaceuticals, medical equipment and consumable supplies to healthcare professionals and aid agencies in over 140 countries. As well as reacting rapidly to emergency situations, Durbin PLC responds to healthcare supply needs from local project level to national scale programmes. Web address: www.durbin.co.uk Email: L.morgan@durbin.co.uk