

Overcoming shortages of drugs: pharmaceutical companies call for pragmatic, responsible solution

Supply disruptions are a major concern for pharmaceutical companies.

From February 2019 onwards, in outlining its action plan to reduce supply disruptions, Leem advocated higher safety stocks for key pharmaceuticals (medicinal products of strategic importance to health - MISS), i.e. for those for which no therapeutic alternative is available and where supply disruptions could have a life-threatening impact.

The 2020 Social Security Finance Act per se introduces the possibility of increasing the mandatory storage period of pharmaceuticals for up to four months (Article 48).

Some patient associations are currently calling for a mandatory four-month storage period for all medicinal products of major therapeutic interest (MITM).

Leem points out that MITMs represent half of the 15,000 medicinal products currently marketed in France. A mandatory four-month storage period for all of these products would therefore prove unworkable from a material perspective.

Furthermore, Leem stresses the fact that these are mostly old drugs of low value. Prolonging the storage life of these medicinal products to an excessive extent would radically alter their operating conditions and probably cause some suppliers to withdraw them from the market.

Finally, far from solving the problem of supply disruptions, an over-constraining storage period would therefore exacerbate the situation.

In addition, as evidenced by the recent Covid-19 pandemic and its unprecedented demand for certain resuscitation products, pharmaceuticals must be able to flow freely in order to meet patients' needs around the globe. Even if there is no such thing as zero risk in combating supply disruptions, companies can cope more effectively with supply pressures by mobilising resources at international level.

Leem is in favour of securing stocks of key medicinal products but as part of a pragmatic, responsible approach in the patients' interests. However, it refutes any protectionist reflex which, if extended on a global scale, would prevent all patients from accessing essential treatments.

Leem once again calls for a realistic solution and reiterates its desire to join forces with patients in this approach.

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