



Care-Rx  
HEALTH

# DELIVERING PHARMACEUTICAL CARE SINCE 2008

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Editor: Tiffany Nguyen, Pharm.D.

## QUICK UPDATES

### NEW HOURS OF OPERATION

Home Care-Rx now has extended hours:

- Monday thru Friday 6am-2:30am
- Saturday, Sunday and Holidays 9am-12am
- On-call services available 24/7

Please note Creative Compounding hours differ:

- Monday thru Friday 9am-6pm
- Closed Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays

### MEDS ON NATIONAL SHORTAGE

Hospice-related drugs currently on backorder:

- Atropine 1% ophthalmic solution
- Haloperidol tablets (0.5 mg, 1 mg, 2 mg)
- Lorazepam tablets (0.5 mg)
- Megestrol 40 mg/mL oral suspension
- Nystatin 100,000 U/mL oral suspension
- Scopolamine 1 mg/3 days transdermal patch

However, we offer therapeutic alternatives or compounds in order to provide our hospices with uninterrupted service, and our patients with continued care.

## TEAM MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

### LANG LY, PHARM.D

My name is Lang and I am proud owner of a rescued Miniature Schnauzer with a big personality named Esme and a Leopard Tortoise named Hermes. My wife and I live in Long Beach and are both avid animal lovers. I received my BA in Political Science at UC Riverside and my MBA and Doctor of Pharmacy degree from Western New England University. I've been working as a pharmacist at Home Care-Rx for about 13 months now. I am glad to be

a part of a team of extremely professional pharmacy technicians and highly knowledgeable pharmacists. Being surrounded by such high-quality people has allowed me to grow and develop professionally and personally.

I have been a classically trained pianist since the age of 6 and I have performed at multiple state auditions with the National Piano Guild. I'm fortunate to have been able to travel and lived in various places on both the west and east coast. My experiences have allowed me to pick up many different hobbies. I am an amateur photographer and I like to collect antiques and art from the places that I've visited. Reading is one of my favorite hobbies because it has allowed me the opportunity to reflect upon my past struggles and provided me with the tools to contend with the futility of present and future struggles.

*"...The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy."*

In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Albert Camus suggests that we are all Sisyphus pushing our personal rock; we are all Oedipus fighting fate and marching to an inevitable death. Our time before the end is defined by our own perception of what we are doing and that we choose to continue to march forward. It doesn't matter if the rock rolls down again because it is the journey which matters.

### KAT ABITONG

*"Ang hindi marunong lumingon sa pinangalingan ay hindi makakarating sa paroroonan."* (He who does not know how to look back at where he came from will never get to his destination.) - Dr. Jose Rizal

Hello, my name is Kathleen, but everyone calls me Kat. I'm one of Home Care-Rx's pharmacy technicians and usually work the late shifts. About two years ago, I was hired right after finishing the Pharmacy Technician

Program at NOCCC and my internship at Home Care-Rx. Working at Home Care-Rx has been one of the greatest things to have happened to me. I've had opportunities to learn pharmacy-related skills and continue to enhance my knowledge to promote quality care and comfort for our patients in their last days. I've also met the most amazing people who, unexpectedly and almost instantly, became my family. They have helped me in so many ways, sticking by my side through all the good and bad times, supporting me every step of the way; I know they will always have my back. I am not the person that I am today without them—without Home Care-Rx.

I'm also currently in school, aiming to become a pharmacist. I enjoy hanging out with my closest friends, but mostly spend my free time at home surrounded by plants, studying and/or catching up with my favorite TV shows. I probably have 30 happy house plants. Something about them makes me feel happy, as if I were back at home in the Philippines. If money and time weren't an issue, I'd go back home, build my own house with a sun room and a garden and start a plant nursery.

Thank you for taking the time to get to know me. I appreciate all of you making our patients' lives as comfortable as possible and helping them in so many ways unimaginable. I hope to get to know you as well. We will be here if you have any questions or concerns. Let us know, we are always willing to help.

## DRUG SHORTAGES: EXPLAINED

Drug shortages have directly impacted patient care for more than 35 years. In 2012, the US FDA issued Sandoz Canada a warning letter requiring them to become compliant with good manufacturing practices. Sandoz Canada had to stop production of generic medications which led to a major drug shortage now called the “Sandoz Crisis.” Although this crisis shed light on the growing drug shortage issue, FDA regulations are not the only cause of drug shortages. The US drug supply chain has multiple key players located worldwide. Common issues along the supply chain are discussed below in order to better explain potential sources of drug shortages.

**Supplier.** The supplier is responsible for providing all the raw materials needed to make a medication. Although there are suppliers located around the globe, one may be the sole supplier of a particular raw material. This

can directly affect multiple manufacturers that use that particular raw material for their final drug product. Supplies not only include the direct ingredients of the drug (active or inactive), but also primary packaging that certain medications require. Certain medications require special primary packaging in order to maintain the stability of the drug.

**Manufacturer.** The manufacturer receives all the raw materials from the supplier and prepares the medications. If any of the key components are missing, then the medication cannot be prepared. Aside from regulatory and compliance issues, manufacturers can also make business decisions to stop production of certain medications. Generic medications suffer the most, as manufacturers have little financial incentive to produce these medications. Both the FDA and manufacturers can also recall medications. A major drug recall of a drug product that is produced by a single manufacturer can also lead to a drug shortage.

**Wholesaler.** The wholesaler houses all the prepared medications from various manufacturers. If a medication is not available at the wholesaler end, it is considered backordered. Backordered means that various pharmacies/hospitals are waiting for the replenishment in stock of that particular medication. Most wholesalers provide an estimated date for when the medication will be back in stock. However, sometimes these estimates can be unreliable as delays in receiving products from the manufacturers can occur.

**Pharmacy/Hospital.** Hospitals and pharmacies maintain a stock supply of commonly used medications for their specific patient population. For instance, at Home Care-Rx, there is a large stock of comfort medications that are commonly used. Regular outpatient pharmacies do not maintain a large supply of these medications as these are not their target population. Furthermore, pharmacies and hospitals are contracted with certain wholesalers. When backorders occur, pharmacies and hospitals work with all their contracted wholesalers to attempt to procure the medication. However, typically if one wholesaler has a backordered medication, it is likely that other wholesalers also have the medication backordered.

**Patient/Healthcare Provider.** At the end of the supply chain are the healthcare providers and patients. Healthcare providers determine the optimal treatment option for their patients, and with a prescription or order, request these medications from the pharmacy. Our pharmacists remain vigilant of any shortages and are

readily available to inform the healthcare provider of any drug shortages.

**Solutions.** At Home Care-Rx, we attempt to maintain adequate supplies of commonly used medications. However, backorders and shortages can come unexpectedly. In order to conserve the remaining supply, consider limiting the quantity (or days' supply) to ensure that all patients are covered during shortages. Our pharmacists can work closely with nurses and physicians to determine whether a therapeutic equivalent or compounded alternative may be appropriate.

Due to the various causes of drug shortages, it can be difficult to foresee a drug shortage; however, our pharmacists are here to help you find solutions to ensure continuity of care.

*Author: Heidi Ruiz, PharmD Candidate '19  
Chapman University School of Pharmacy*

## **AB-1753: ADDITIONAL IMPROVEMENT TO CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE SECURITY PRESCRIPTION FORMS**

New changes and requirements on controlled substance security prescription forms were introduced by the California State Board of Pharmacy toward the end of 2018 to take effect January 1, 2019. The new law would require controlled substance security prescription forms to have an additional serialized number that is unique to each form; the format is to be determined and approved by the Department of Justice. However, it did not seem that the time frame given would be beneficial for this transition.

### **If not now, when will the transition take into effect?**

There were concerns that this guidance was not given in a timely manner to be implemented by prescribers, which can lead to interrupted patient care. Therefore, Assembly Bill 149 allowed a delay of the requirement of prescription forms to include the unique serialized number to take into effect no later than January 1, 2020.

Additionally, AB-149 would allow the following:

1. Require the serialized number to be utilizable as a barcode that dispensers can scan
2. Make prescriptions written on a form that was otherwise valid preceding January 1, 2019, to be a valid prescription that may be filled, compounded, or dispensed until January 1, 2021

3. Authorize the Department of Justice to extend this time period no longer than an additional 6 months, if there is an insufficient availability of compliant prescription forms

### **Specifications to the serialized number on controlled substance prescription forms**

Determined by the Department of Justice, the serialized number should meet the minimum requirements:

1. Be compliant with all state and federal requirements
2. Be utilizable as a barcode that may be scanned by dispensers
3. Be compliant with current National Council for Prescription Drug Program Standards

### **How does this affect us?**

AB-1753 and AB-149 as of today, does not address if long-term care and/or hospice patients are included or excluded from the new law changes. However, there have not been any new updates regarding changes to the "11159.2 exemption" prescription, so terminally ill patients who are eligible may not have to worry about having the additional required serialized number to controlled substance prescriptions.

*Author: Cindy Trieu, PharmD Candidate '19  
Roseman University of Health Sciences*

### **LUNCH & LEARN**

Home Care-Rx's very own Clinical Coordinator and Pharmacist, Alex Velasco, travels to present nurses with educational tools such as:

- Home Care-Rx pharmacy operations
- PCA/CADD pump in-services
- Pain management bootcamp (methadone dosing, opioid conversions)

Please contact our pharmacy for more information

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*We are open to any suggestions and feedback that you may have. Please email [tinguyen@carerxhealth.com](mailto:tinguyen@carerxhealth.com) with topics you would like to read or learn about.*