News Release

HEALTH CARE ORGANIZATIONS TEAM UP TO ADDRESS NATION'S DRUG SHORTAGES PROBLEMS

Groups will develop recommendations to prevent patient harm, minimize disruptions in care.

Bethesda, Md.— Four leading health care groups will meet next month to develop a coordinated effort to address the critical issue of drug shortages. Co-conveners of the Drug Shortages Summit include the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA), the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP), and the Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP). The invitation-only event will be held on November 5 in Bethesda, Md.

Problems caused by drug shortages have received much public attention in recent months and have caused significant disruptions in patient care. These disruptions include canceled or delayed medical treatments and procedures, as well as adverse events caused by medications that may have the potential for greater harm than the first line therapy that is unavailable due to a shortage.

The Summit will include participants from health professional organizations, pharmaceutical manufacturers, and supply chain entities. Representatives of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and other regulatory agencies will attend portions of the meeting as observers. Participants will:

- Discuss the scope and causes of drug shortages;
- Shed light on the harm to patients that is occurring due to the drug shortages;

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- Discuss the potential need for changes in public policy and stakeholder practices to prevent patient harm from shortages; and
- Develop an assertive action plan that reflects the recommendations and intent of stakeholders to work together to stop patient harm and disruptions in patient care caused by drug shortages.

"Health care professionals are most alarmed by the increasing volume of medications in short supply, use of unfamiliar alternative drugs, and the potential for errors, poor patient outcomes or preventable adverse drug events," said ISMP President Michael Cohen, RPh, MS, ScD, FASHP. "To address those concerns, stakeholders in the process will need to develop a strategic plan aimed at reducing the occurrence of shortages, ensuring more effective FDA oversight, and creating a comprehensive early warning system."

ISMP has raised awareness of the impact of drug shortages on patient safety as well as possible ways to deal with this complex problem, including completing a survey of 1800 health professionals in 2010 that revealed top frustrations and concerns and publishing recommendations on how healthcare organizations can cope with ongoing shortages in its ISMP Medication Safety Alert!® newsletter.

ASHP has a long history of leading efforts to help the health care community manage issues related to drug shortages, including establishing the Drug Shortages Web Resource Center (www.ashp.org/drugshortages) in 2004 and publishing the *ASHP Guidelines on Managing Drug Product Shortages*.

"The number of drug shortages reported to the Center has doubled since its creation," said ASHP President Diane Ginsburg, M.S., FASHP. "These include some critically needed medications, such as propofol, heparin, and some cancer treatments," Ginsburg adds. "It is extremely important for us to find ways to prevent drug shortages from occurring, whenever possible, and minimize the negative effects in instances where shortages are unavoidable. Addressing the problems that make drug shortages possible must be our top priority, and it will take unprecedented levels of collaboration and commitment by all stakeholders to get it done. "

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ASCO tracks cancer therapy shortages to monitor their impact on patient care, communicates with its membership to alert them to current shortages, and works with the FDA when appropriate.

"A shortage of a particular therapy can be a matter of life and death for cancer patients who require that drug. These drug shortages and subsequent changes in treatment can lead to the use of less optimal treatment as well as increased costs and administrative burdens for both patients and oncologists," said Michael Link, MD, President-Elect of the American Society of Clinical Oncology. "ASCO is pleased to work with the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, the American Society of Anesthesiologists, and the Institute for Safe Medication Practices to identify solutions to this crisis in cancer care."

ASA was a leader in developing solutions to help anesthesiologists manage through the propofol shortage by working with the FDA to allow the importation of a European formulation of the medication. ASA is also supporting members through the drug shortages by providing guidance on how best to use alternative therapies in practice.

"ASA has received an unprecedented number of anesthesia drug shortage reports from member physicians this year." said Mark Warner, M.D., President of the American Society of Anesthesiologists. "These ongoing shortages are making it increasingly difficult for anesthesiologists to provide the high level of safe anesthesia care we are used to providing our patients. ASA's number one commitment has always been patient safety, which is why we will continue working with all stakeholders in an effort to resolve this serious problem."

About the Co-Conveners

American Society of Anesthesiologists
Anesthesiologists: Physicians providing the lifeline of modern medicine. Founded in 1905, the American Society of Anesthesiologists is an educational, research and scientific association with 45,000 members organized to raise and maintain the standards of the medical practice of anesthesiology and improve the care of the patient.

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American Society of Clinical Oncology
The American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) is the world's leading professional organization representing physicians who care for people with cancer. With more than 28,000 members, ASCO is committed to improving cancer care through scientific meetings, educational programs and peer-reviewed journals. For ASCO information and resources, visit www.asco.org. Patient-oriented cancer information is available at www.Cancer.Net.

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American Society of Health-System Pharmacists
For more than 60 years, ASHP has helped pharmacists who practice in hospitals and health systems improve medication use and enhance patient safety. The Society's 35,000 members include pharmacists and pharmacy technicians who practice in inpatient, outpatient, home-care, and long-term-care settings, as well as pharmacy students. For more information about the wide array of ASHP activities and the many ways in which pharmacists help people make the best use of medicines, visit ASHP's Web site, www.ashp.org*, or its consumer Web site,* www.SafeMedication.com*.*

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Institute for Safe Medication Practices
ISMP is an independent, nonprofit charitable organization that works closely with healthcare practitioners and institutions, regulatory agencies, consumers, and professional organizations to provide education about medication errors and their prevention. ISMP represents more than 35 years of experience in helping healthcare practitioners keep patients safe, and continues to lead efforts to improve the medication use process. ISMP is a federally certified patient safety organization (PSO), providing healthcare practitioners and organizations with the highest level of legal protection and confidentiality for patient safety data and error reports they submit to the Institute. For more information on ISMP, or its medication safety alert newsletters and other tools for healthcare professionals and consumers, visit www.ismp.org.

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