
Staff Shortages and Burn Out in Cancer Medication Administration in Europe



Several studies and reports have underscored the severe consequences of workforce shortages in healthcare, particularly in the administration of cancer medication across Europe. These shortages significantly affect waiting times and patient safety, posing an overriding concern for healthcare systems.

Staff shortages lead to extended waiting times for patients awaiting treatment. This delay can compromise the effectiveness of cancer medication, potentially diminishing patient outcomes. Furthermore, the risk of medication errors escalates when healthcare professionals are overworked or insufficiently staffed. Errors in the preparation or administration of chemotherapy drugs can result in severe complications, including toxicity, organ damage, or even death.

To alleviate staff shortages and mitigate medication errors, numerous scientific bodies advocate for the implementation of electronic traceability systems and automation. These technologies are considered the most efficient solutions to enhance medication safety and improve operational efficiency, thus reducing waiting lists. However, the adoption of these systems in European hospitals and outpatient settings remains limited.

A new report written on behalf of the European Collaborative Action on Medication Errors and Traceability ([ECAMET](#)) and the [EAASM](#) highlights the consequences of a lack of staff in complex medical treatment situations such as cancer care.

The report describes the impact of staff shortages and the size of the problem and also the severe impact on staff and family members. It also highlights that numerous electronic traceability systems and automation, being introduced are the most efficient ways to reduce medication errors in cancer medication and improve efficiency to mitigate staff shortages.

The foreword has been co-signed by leading stakeholders namely: [All.can](#), [ECAMET Alliance](#), EHMA and [ESNO](#), the essence of which is summarised here:

"We believe strongly that this issue of increased efficiency through digital solutions combined with the right human resource levels is fundamental to patient safety and enhanced health outcomes. We, therefore, call upon the EU institutions to address this within relevant legislation to ensure that Member State-wide staff shortages are acted upon with urgency"

Key findings of the report are summarised here:

- There is a shortage of staff to administer complex medication regimens and a lack of human resources can only lead to a spiralling down of standards and efficiency of care
- Digital solutions can be implemented quickly and efficiently and a study carried out revealed that of the 317 senior hospital pharmacists surveyed across Member States cited the main barriers to this were funding and human resources

[>Download the Whitepaper](https://ehma.org/app/uploads/2024/06/Staff-Shortages-and-Burn-Out-in-Cancer-Medication-Administration-in-Europe-WP.pdf)

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