



The First 90 Days of the COVID-19 Response

The U.S. pharmaceutical supply chain was resilient and effective in responding to the global pandemic.

In the face of an unprecedented public health crisis, and surging demand for prescriptions, pharmaceutical distributors quickly adapted and adjusted to protect the steady supply of critical medicines to hospitals, pharmacies, providers and patients.



Pharmacy shelves remained stocked and hospitals had access to the prescription medicines patients needed.

- While drug shortages as measured by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) increased, there were few significant disruptions to patients. At least **83 percent of drugs** that were reported in shortage to the FDA had a second-line or alternative treatment available.
- Disruptions were concentrated around investigational treatments and other therapies used for COVID-19 patients. If COVID-19-related drugs are excluded, the average number of shortages would be virtually the same as the historical average (**32.8 vs. 31.8 monthly drug shortages**).



Distributors and their supply chain partners protected the steady supply of critical medicines to hospitals, pharmacies, providers and patients.

- By balancing increased demand through avoidance of single sourcing, supply risk monitoring, communication and data transparency, and proactive inventory management; and,
- Communicating with federal and state officials to flag challenges and regulatory burdens early and work together on solutions.



Distributors anticipated changes in demand, responded to evolving patient needs and mitigated disruptions.

- By collaborating with supply chain partners, deploying their logistics expertise and bringing to bear their past emergency response experience;
- Leveraging a 360-degree-view of the supply chain to enable inventory visibility and information sharing with partners;
- Employing individual drug allocation programs to equitably manage inventory of the most in-demand products; and,
- Helping customers find alternative treatments for in-demand products.



The initial response effort provided many critical lessons that can be applied to future milestones, such as the availability of COVID-19 vaccines.

- The private sector is a crucial partner;
- Responding to supply challenges requires adaptation; and,
- Coordination across the supply chain and with government is essential.

Managing Increased Demand

Distributors put in place drug allocation programs to ensure efficient and **fair distribution of pharmaceuticals** in the face of surging demand. Through these company-specific programs, distributors balanced historical usage with the urgent, increased needs for treating COVID-19 patients, particularly in “hot spots” identified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Distributors’ actions helped equip U.S. sites of care to combat the virus while protecting the stability of the supply chain.



For additional information on pharmaceutical supply chain’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic, download [*The First 90 Days: US Biopharmaceutical Finished Goods Supply Chain Response to COVID-19*](#) through the [HDA website](#).