



142nd Session WHO Executive Board

Agenda Item 3.6, Addressing the global shortage of, and access to, medicines and vaccines

Thank you for the opportunity to deliver this statement on behalf of ESMO, the European Society for Medical Oncology.

ESMO is composed of over 17,000 medical professionals who treat patients with cancer medicines. We welcome a WHO global medicine shortage notification system. We encourage WHO to look at the issue of access to medicines in the broadest sense – to set reporting criteria, to collect information on the cause of shortages, including pricing and reimbursement, and to provide strategic guidance on how to prevent and manage shortages – so that governments and hospitals can act swiftly and appropriately in the unfortunate event that a shortage occurs.

We propose that the global notification system not only apply to medicines on the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines (EML), but in a second step to all medicines that provide a significant clinical benefit. This is in line with WHO's guiding principle of universal health coverage that leaves no one behind and offers appropriate and affordable treatment to everyone who needs it.

Shortages result in cancer patients not being optimally treated according to ESMO's evidence-based Clinical Practice Guidelines. Doctors need to switch to other medicines which may be less effective, more costly, or associated with greater adverse reactions. Lack of supportive and palliative care medicines leave patients under-served and in pain. Clinical trials can be delayed.

We hope the 2017 policy recommendations published by ESMO and The Economist Intelligence Unit on how to prevent and manage shortages of inexpensive essential cancer medicines in Europe can be useful to WHO. In summary they recommend to: Provide a clear definition of a medicine shortage, introduce legislation for early notification, establish strategic plans for shortages at national and institutional levels, develop a harmonized web-based platform, assess risks of shortages for medicines on the WHO EML, introduce incentives for production, and establish procurement models.

Thank you.