

## Healthcare Distribution Association (HDA) Statement re Strep A treatment availability

There is not a shortage generally of these treatments, but packs are not currently in the supply chain in sufficient quantities to meet the current sudden huge demand surge. Pharmaceutical wholesale distributors are working very hard with their manufacturer partners to increase supply to meet this unprecedented demand. For example, orders originally placed with manufacturers for January 2023 are being delivered in the next few days.

HDA believes there has been a huge and very sudden spike in demand - for example, one large pharmacy group ordered one normal month's worth of Strep A-related antibiotic products in one day last week! Wholesale distributors have been forced to cap orders now to even out distribution. In some cases, HDA wholesale distributors have supplied more packs of these products than they did in the whole of December last year in the first few days of December 2022, hence why the products have dropped out of stock this week.

HDA requests that NHSE/DHSC puts out robust communications, as occurred before Brexit requesting all players involved in medicines supply to not over-prescribe, hoard or stockpile.

Additionally, why weren't all players in the medicines supply chain, including manufacturers, not communicated with in advance of the lowering of doctors' prescription thresholds for antibiotics last week for example?

As regards pricing, the prices charged to pharmacies by HDA wholesale distributors will **directly** reflect the increase in prices wholesalers are having to pay for these medicines from manufacturers at the moment, in order to be able to continue supplying these medicines to pharmacies. This will be the case until supply and demand are more in sync. The supply of generics is a 'commodity-based' market, where manufacturers are free to price based on demand and competition – right now there is too much demand for products and not enough competitive products being made available to buy from the manufacturers. These particular products have been in low demand for some years now, as the threshold to prescribe was raised to help combat Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR) issues.

If there are real concerns, then regulators and authorities will consider any facts presented to them in a very transparent fashion. HDA only speaks for its member companies who distribute over 90% of prescription medicines on behalf of the NHS. There are over 1,000 other, often much smaller, wholesalers that the Association does *not* represent.

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