

Media Contact

Jon Dobson: mediarelations@usp.org

Office: +1-301-692-3617

Doctors Say Medicines Supply Chain Vulnerabilities Impacted Patient Care and Must Be Strengthened

Survey reveals overwhelming majority of doctors believe the supply chain is not prepared to face future health crises

Rockville, Md., February 3, 2022 – The vast majority (95%) of U.S. physicians believe that the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed vulnerabilities in the medicines supply chain that are not going away, and seven out of 10 (73%) feel their trust in the ability of the supply chain to deliver safe, quality medicines has eroded, according to a [survey](#) released today by [U.S. Pharmacopeia](#) (USP), a global independent scientific organization.¹ A large majority believe the responsibility for solutions falls on multiple stakeholders.

Nine out of 10 physicians surveyed (90%) said they are concerned that the global medicines supply chain may not be reliable in a time of crisis.

“As Congress considers bipartisan legislation on pandemic preparedness, the survey results further strengthen the case to meaningfully address medicines supply chain vulnerabilities, including the potential for drug shortages, before the next public health crisis,” said Ronald T. Piervincenzi, Ph.D., CEO of U.S. Pharmacopeia.

“Despite its enormous complexity the medicines supply chain has not ‘broken.’ Rather, the pandemic surfaced both longstanding vulnerabilities and acute, pandemic-driven resiliency gaps,” Piervincenzi continued. “We must continue to work together on multi-pronged solutions to identify and mitigate supply chain vulnerabilities that adversely impact physicians’ ability to deliver quality care and erode trust in quality medicines.”

The survey showed 83% of physicians believe drug shortages have become a bigger problem in recent years – a topic touched on in a 2019 FDA [report](#) that found 62% of drug shortages occur because of quality issues in manufacturing. Physicians working in underserved communities were more likely to report negative outcomes from medication shortages than physicians who do not serve those vulnerable communities (37% vs. 29% reported negative outcomes “often” or “sometimes” from such shortages), and physicians working in underserved communities were more likely to recommend non-drug alternatives when shortages occurred during the previous 18 months (32% vs. 23%).² Misinformation on the internet, social media, and the news also makes it more difficult to treat patients, according to 94% of survey respondents.

Results showed physicians surveyed believe there is more than one group responsible for maintaining a resilient medicines supply chain:

- Federal government – 92%
- Pharmaceutical companies – 92%
- Pharmaceutical wholesalers and distributors – 91%
- Standard setting organizations – 89%
- National governments (where medicines are manufactured) – 83%
- National governments (reliant on medicines for their citizens) – 79%
- Payors/health insurance companies – 79%

“The challenges today are bigger than any one group can solve, so it is important for us to work together,” Piervincenzi added. “Together with stakeholders across the healthcare ecosystem, USP works to support supply chain resilience and trust in medicines through public quality standards, which are an essential part of the solution.”

Most physicians surveyed (62%) believe significant reliance on other countries for medicines is among the biggest contributing factors to possible medicine shortages. More than four out of five (83%) believe the U.S. is too dependent on medicines manufactured in other countries, and 90% say more medicines need to be produced in the U.S.

Stakeholders in Washington and elsewhere are working to advance solutions to address weak spots in the medicines supply chain. In February, USP will kick off a series of meetings with health and science organizations that are members of the [USP Convention](#) to better understand specific solutions to increase supply chain resilience. USP supports initiatives that reduce barriers to the adoption of pharmaceutical continuous manufacturing technology to help build global production capacity and guard against supply disruptions; advance the use of data to help identify and fix weaker links in the supply chain; and bolster medicines quality systems. In addition, USP worked with stakeholders to develop [recommendations](#) that include improving the structure and function of the Strategic National Stockpile and increasing international cooperation among supply chain partners such as governments and manufacturers. Additional information about efforts to strengthen the medicines supply chain can be found at <https://www.usp.org/supply-chain>. To download the survey, click [here](#).

About USP

USP is an independent scientific organization that collaborates with the world's top experts in health and science to develop quality resources and standards for medicines, dietary supplements, and food ingredients. Through our resources, standards, advocacy and education, USP helps increase the availability of quality medicines, supplements and foods for billions of people worldwide. For more information, visit www.usp.org.

¹ The nationwide survey included 500 board-certified U.S. physicians who work at or are affiliated with a hospital system or spend some portion of their time working in a hospital setting. The survey was conducted on behalf of USP by Ipsos in September 2021.

² Vulnerable populations are defined as those located in zip codes designated as “Health Professional Shortage Areas” listed [here](#).