

Quality of the supply of adrenaline autoinjectors (AAIs) in Ireland

IFAN has expressed its deep concern regarding this issue.

Allowing three companies distribute devices in Ireland may have relieved the problem of overall supply. However, it has also created serious problems, which need to be addressed.

All three devices have unique elements to their delivery, which although simple, have been proven to be difficult to master in an emergency. Hence, patients and carers (in the case of children: parents, grandparents, teachers and coaches) all have to be trained in advance, in delivery technique. Ideally, they should be trained in the use of one device, which would then be repeatedly purchased.

Unfortunately patients are being forced to regularly purchase different devices due to unacceptably short expiry dates and poor availability. This greatly increases the risk of failed delivery of a device in an emergency. This risk is further increased by difficult access to training devices. Furthermore, the financial burden increases the likelihood of patients failing to purchase adequate numbers of AAIs or carrying them beyond their expiry date.

Shelf life: The AAIs being sold to patients across the country have unacceptably low shelf lives. A recent sampling of shelf lives of AAIs at time of purchase by patients from a Dublin paediatric clinic that supports children across Ireland, revealed that out of 60 devices only 43% had a shelf life of greater than 10 months, 20% had shelf lives of 8-10 months, 20% had shelf lives of 6-8 months and 15% of devices sold had <6 months to their expiry date.

Supply of particular brands: Pharmacies are repeatedly telling customers that they cannot access a particular brand. In some cases the AAIs are unavailable; in other cases, pharmacies seem to be unable to source devices despite reassurances from the companies that they are in the country.

Training materials: Patients continue to have difficulty accessing trainer devices. To date, not all companies/distributors provide them through their websites.

In summary: IFAN believes that merely ensuring that there are enough devices in the country is no longer an acceptable standard. We are a small market and thus a vulnerable market. We strongly believe that the current haphazard supply of AAls in Ireland is forcing customers to purchase devices that they and other carers have not been trained to use, thus placing patients at risk of not having adrenaline correctly delivered in the event of a life threatening allergic reaction. This could result in a completely avoidable fatality.

Having identified this grave risk, IFAN are now calling on the HPRA to act.

IFAN believes that the supply and distribution of AAls should be more tightly regulated and not governed by international commercial interests, as is currently the case.

IFAN recommends that

1. All companies have to ensure a constant supply of their AAls in Ireland with a minimum expiry date of 12 months.
2. All adrenaline autoinjectors must be dispensed with an attached trainer device and trainer devices must be available via company websites.
3. An improved model for the sourcing of AAls for pharmacies be developed.
4. An education campaign is developed for pharmacists to highlight the importance of providing patients with AAls that they are familiar with.

This is extracted from an original communication sent by IFAN to the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) on 02 09 15. We await their reply and will update members accordingly.

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