

**SHORTAGES OF MEDICINES:  
INCREASED RISKS  
FOR PATIENTS  
EVERYWHERE  
FOCUS ON CANCER**



Shortages of medicines are increasingly affecting patients and this situation was apparent long before the COVID-19 health crisis. With 1,499 incidents or stock-outs reported by the ANSM (French National Agency for Medicines and Health Products Safety)<sup>1</sup>, 2019 was a record year for shortages with 30 times more such incidents reported than in 2008. In 2017, 22% of shortages reported to the ANSM were related to oncology, i.e., around 40 essential medicines<sup>2</sup>. Faced with the sheer scale of this problem and the failure to look after the needs and rights of patients, the French League Against Cancer conducted an exploratory study among patients and health professionals in November 2019. The situation was already at crisis-levels in November 2019 and it is only going to get worse in the wake of the new coronavirus health crisis. As a government-backed political and institutional response takes shape, the French League Against Cancer is gearing up to play its role as an accredited representative of health system users: it is highly urgent to deal with the consequences of shortages of medicines and the key issue – aside from any industrial or political considerations – is ensuring that patients get the best care available.

# SHORTAGES OF ANTI-CANCER MEDICINES: ALARMING FINDINGS

Source: LNCC/IPSOS 2019 survey – Sample of 500 professionals surveyed.

## A frequent problem for health professionals

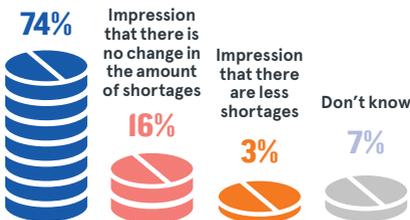


Nearly **3 OUT OF EVERY 4 HEALTH PROFESSIONALS** have already had to deal with shortages of anti-cancer medicines.

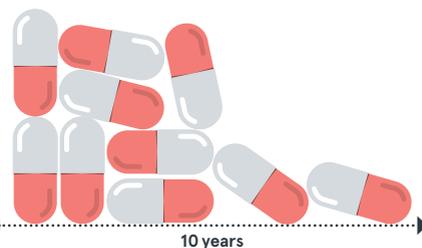
Shortages of anti-cancer medicines concern both **medicines used to treat cancer and those used to treat its side-effects**. Certain health professionals such as **pharmacists and oncologists** are especially worried over shortages of specific medicines.

## Based on the experience of health professionals, the problem has been getting worse for the past 10 years

Impression that shortages are increasing



**OVER THE PAST 10 YEARS**  
3 out of every 4 health professionals have noted **WORSENING SHORTAGES** of anti-cancer medicines.

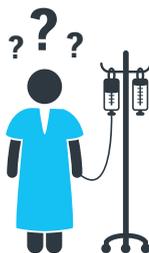


Nearly **60% OF ONCOLOGISTS** claim that shortages have worsened over the past 10 years.  
**95% OF HOSPITAL PHARMACISTS** have noted an increase in the problem.

1. ANSM, 2020. Public presentation of the Agency's results for 2019 given to a French ministerial working group on 16 January. 2. DAUDIGNY, Y., DECOOL, J.P., 2018. Report made following a fact-finding mission on drug and vaccine shortages. Extraordinary Session of the French Senate in 2017-2018, n°737.

Despite being directly impacted, patients are not able to clearly identify potential shortages of anti-cancer medicines

While most healthcare professionals involved in treating cancer are confronted with shortages of medicines, many patients **are not in a position in which they can know with certainty** that they have experienced a shortage.



They are unable to systematically distinguish between cancer-specific treatments and medicines prescribed for other conditions. This situation gives rise to **CONCERNS OVER POSSIBLE SHORTAGES OF ANTI-CANCER MEDICINES**, a source of **ADDITIONAL STRESS** for patients.



1. The French League Against Cancer demands that the public authorities systematically measure the number of people who do not have access to the medicines they were initially prescribed.

## ABNORMALLY POOR INFORMATION



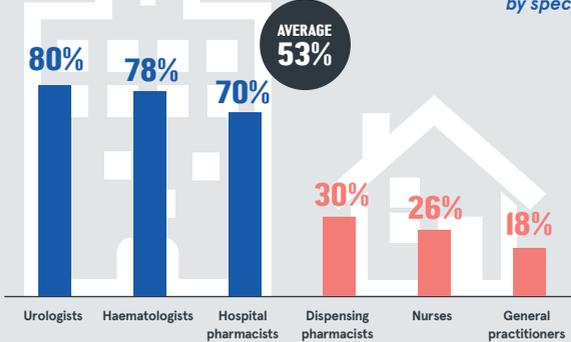
**53% OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS BELIEVE THEY ARE POORLY INFORMED**  
about shortages of medicines.

Source: LNCC/IPSOS 2019 survey  
Sample of 500 professionals surveyed.



## Outpatient care professionals are especially poorly informed

Percentage of health professionals who feel they are adequately informed about shortages of anti-cancer medicines, by speciality.



Because there was huge demand, dispensing pharmacists were never able to tell us if they would receive deliveries, nor when, nor how much. We had to call them to see if the medicine was available.

Louise, 34, lymphoma sufferer.

Source: LNCC/IPSOS 2019 survey  
Sample of 500 professionals surveyed.



2. The French League Against Cancer demands a collective information system on shortages of medicines for health professionals, especially those involved in outpatient care. This information system should boost transparency in terms of the origin, duration and past history of these shortages.

## MULTIPLE CONSEQUENCES FOR PATIENTS

A shared impression: lack of information

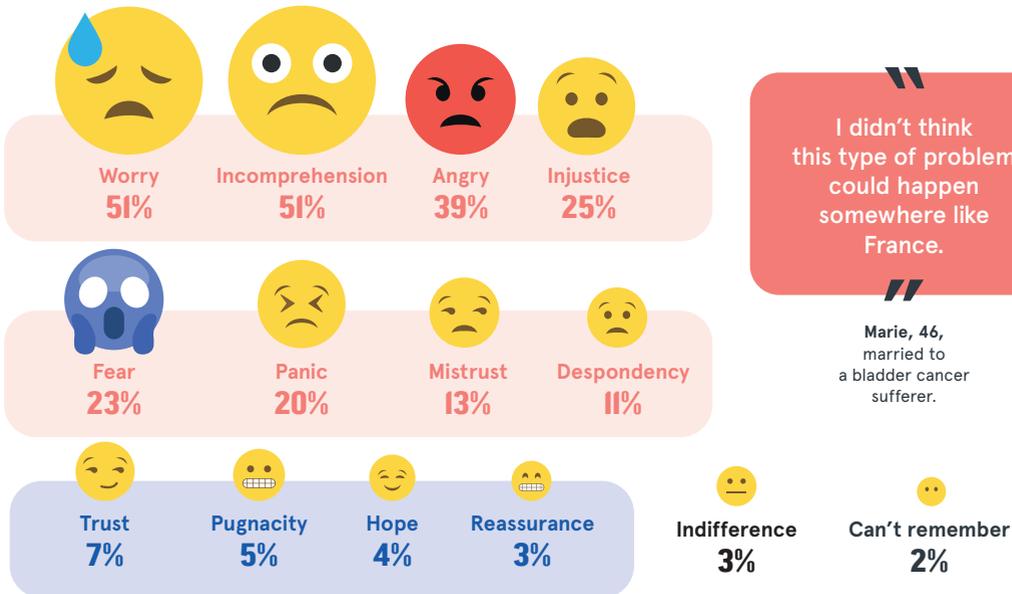


**67% OF PATIENTS  
BELIEVE THEY ARE  
POORLY INFORMED**  
about shortages of  
anti-cancer medicines.

Source: LNCC/IPSOS 2019 survey  
Sample 1,368 patients surveyed.



## Unavailability of medicine: the initial shock



Source: LNCC/IPSOS 2019 survey - Sample of 210 patients surveyed, some of whom have been confronted by a shortage of anti-cancer medicine.

## Unsatisfactory answers for patients

People don't always get satisfactory answers to their questions. **Health professionals are not equipped to provide them with answers**, particularly concerning the specific aspects of medicine shortages.

*Level of satisfaction with answers provided to questions put by patients when non-availability of anti-cancer medicines was announced*

Concerning the reasons for unavailability



Concerning the impacts of substitution treatments on your quality of life



■ Satisfied ■ Not satisfied ■ Didn't hear about it ■ Can't remember

Source: LNCC/IPSOS 2019 survey - Sample of 210 patients surveyed, some of whom have been confronted by a shortage of anti-cancer medicine.



The French League Against Cancer demands that the public authorities take the measures necessary to ensure that the rights of patients to information are respected and applied, in accordance with the Law of 4 March 2002 concerning the rights of patients and the quality of the healthcare system<sup>3</sup>.

3. Law No. 2002-303 of 4 March 2002 concerning the rights of patients and the quality of the healthcare system.

## A sensitive issue: increased risks for patients?

**75%**  
of health professionals  
agree that shortages  
of anti-cancer medicines  
**INCREASE RISKS FOR PATIENTS.**

*Source: LNCC/IPSOS 2019 survey  
Sample of 500 professionals surveyed.*



**45%** of health professionals  
confronted with shortages of  
anti-cancer medicines estimate that  
these **HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE CHANCES**  
**OF THEIR PATIENTS SURVIVING**  
**ANOTHER 5 YEARS.** This rises to  
**68% AMONG MEDICAL ONCOLOGISTS.**



**45%**  
Negative impact

**23%**  
No impact

**32%**  
Don't know

*Source: LNCC/IPSOS 2019 survey - Sample of 369 professional carers  
confronted by a shortage of anti-cancer medicines.*

One-third of health professionals confronted with shortages did not express an opinion as they felt they did not know enough to assess the impacts of shortages on their patients' chances of survival.



4. The French League Against Cancer demands that studies are undertaken to measure the increased risks caused by shortages. These should be carried out by a public, independent body and based on objective criteria.

# PATIENTS <sup>AND</sup> HEALTH PROFESSIONALS UNITED IN THE FACE <sup>OF</sup> SHORTAGES <sup>OF</sup> MEDICINES

Patients recognise that health professionals are in a tricky situation when shortages are announced

Shortages of anti-cancer medicines negatively impact the trust that patients have for the health professionals they deal with.



The unavailability of medicine that forms part of my cancer treatment negatively impacts my trust in the medical team.



Health professionals tend to overestimate the harmful impact of the announcement of medicine shortages on the patients concerned, **which reveals the embarrassing situation this problem places them in.**

Most patients actually state the contrary in the survey. **They claim that they are aware that care professionals are powerless in the face of this problem.**

Source: LNCC/IPSON 2019 survey - Sample of 210 patients surveyed, some of whom have been confronted by a shortage of anti-cancer medicine, and 369 professional carers confronted by a shortage of anti-cancer medicines.

Patients and health professionals feel powerless and wish to see collective action to deal with this problem



94%

of health professionals believe that the health authorities should regulate pharma industry stakeholders more effectively.



80%

believe that pharmaceutical companies should be sanctioned more severely.



Many patients are beginning to act: contacting elected representatives, open letters to the media, etc.

Source: LNCC/IPSON 2019 survey - Sample of 500 professionals surveyed.



5. The French League Against Cancer demands – as the voice of patients – legislation and regulations for shortages of medicines and financial penalties in the event of non-compliance.

# THE FRENCH LEAGUE AGAINST CANCER DEMANDS:

- 1** That the public authorities systematically measure the number of people who do not have access to the medicines they were initially prescribed.
- 2** A collective information system on shortages of medicines for health professionals, especially those involved in outpatient care. This information system should boost transparency in terms of the origin, duration and past history of these shortages.
- 3** That the public authorities take the measures necessary to ensure that the rights of patients to information are respected and applied, in accordance with the Law of 4 March 2002 concerning the rights of patients and the quality of the healthcare system<sup>4</sup>.
- 4** That studies are undertaken to measure the increased risks caused by shortages. These should be carried out by a public, independent body and based on objective criteria.
- 5** As the voice of patients, legislation and regulations for shortages of medicines and financial penalties in the event of non-compliance.

*Online survey for the French League Against Cancer conducted by IPSOS between 29 October and 4 December 2019. 1,358 people who are undergoing treatment, or whose treatment finished less than 10 years ago, and 500 health professionals were interviewed. The sample of patients was adjusted for the location of the cancer, based on estimates of the prevalence (partial and total) of cancer in France among people aged over 15<sup>5</sup>. Each sample of health professionals is representative of the profession surveyed (obtained using the quota method applied to the variables of gender, age and region of practice) according to data published by DREES in 2018<sup>6</sup>.*

4. Law No. 2002-303 of 4 March 2002 concerning the rights of patients and the quality of the healthcare system.

5. Colonna, M., Mitton, N., Grosclaude, P., 2014. Estimated prevalence (partial and total) of cancer in metropolitan France among people aged 15 and over in 2008. INVS, FRANCIM, HCL, INCa.

6. Data DREES, études et statistiques : [www.data.drees.sante.gouv.fr](http://www.data.drees.sante.gouv.fr).



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