

Chemo Drug Shortage Impacts Over 90% of Cancer Centers, Finds Survey

Plus: The National Comprehensive Cancer Network calls for solutions to the shortage that's affecting common treatments for breast, blood, lung and prostate cancers.

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The National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN)—an alliance of [leading academic cancer centers](#)—published [survey results](#) June 7 that shed light on just how widespread the current platinum chemotherapy shortage is, and shared a [statement](#) calling on the whole oncology community to work together on solutions.

“This is an unacceptable situation. We are hearing from oncologists and pharmacists across the country who have to scramble to find appropriate alternatives for treating their patients with cancer right now,” said Robert W. Carlson, MD, Chief Executive Officer, NCCN. “We were relieved by survey results that show patients are still able to get life-saving care, but it comes at a burden to our overtaxed medical facilities. We need to work together to improve the current situation and prevent it from happening again in the future.”

The statement from NCCN’s Policy and Advocacy department outlines specific steps that can be taken by the Federal Government, pharmaceutical industry, providers, and payers to help mitigate any impacts from the anti-cancer drug shortages. It notes: “The causes and solutions to the recurrent anti-cancer drug shortages that deprive oncology patients of optimal therapy are multiple and fixable. Effective solutions require a whole of oncology effort if they are to be successful.”

Carboplatin and cisplatin are platinum-based chemotherapies that are frequently used together for systemic treatment, often with the intent to cure. They have been proven to be highly effective across a variety of cancer types, including lung, breast, and prostate cancers, as well as many leukemias and lymphomas. These two treatments are indicated hundreds of times throughout the NCCN Drugs & Biologics Compendium ([NCCN Compendium](#))—a searchable database of every recommended medication use found in the NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines in Oncology (NCCN Guidelines). They are estimated to be used in the treatment of as many as 500,000 new cancer patients per year.

The survey conducted by the NCCN Best Practices Committee features answers from 27 NCCN Member Institutions serving patients with cancer across the United States. According to their

results, 93% of the centers are currently experiencing a shortage of carboplatin, and 70% have a similar lack of cisplatin.

According to the survey, which ran May 23–31, 2023, 100% of the centers are still able to treat patients who need cisplatin without any delays or claim denials. However, for carboplatin, that number drops to only 64% of centers that are able to keep all current carboplatin patients on the regimen. Another 20% report being able to continue this prescription for some but not all patients. Overall, 16% report treatment delays as a result of needing to re-obtain prior-authorization for modified treatment plans, but none have met with outright denials.

“These results demonstrate the widespread impact of the chemotherapy shortage,” said Alyssa Schatz, MSW, Senior Director of Policy and Advocacy for NCCN. “We hope that by sharing this survey and calling for united action across the oncology community, we can come together to prevent future drug shortages and ensure quality, effective, equitable and accessible cancer care for all.”

The survey revealed that 40% of centers have received information from manufacturers and suppliers on when availability for carboplatin and cisplatin should resume.

Visit [NCCN.org/platinum-statement](https://www.nccn.org/platinum-statement) to view the full statement and [NCCN.org/platinum-survey](https://www.nccn.org/platinum-survey) for the survey results.

[This announcement](#) was originally published June 7, 2023, on the National Comprehensive Cancer Network website.