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From:

Sent: Monday, 5 September 2016 8:41 AM

To: PBS; medicine.shortages@tga.gov.au

Cc: pbs.issues@guild.org.au

Subject: Metformin XR stock crisis [SEC=No Protective Marking]

Importance: High

Attn: Officers in charge (Dept of Health/TGA)

I, like many other pharmacists, have contacted the TGA in regards to the shortage of the Metformin XR formulations. I was initially told that supply of some brands was available, despite confirming with all manufacturers that this was not the case and that supply was not expected for many weeks.

A large proportion of our community, like many others, rely heavily on this particular medication. It is not a "low usage" medication like previous medications in short supply, in fact the contrary. Many of our patients have already run out. Apart from the obvious inconvenience, this technically leaves the consumers with no option but to return to their doctors to have them change them over to either the "immediate release" metformin formulation (which is readily available) or another medication. This no doubt results in a huge burden on the Medicare system, increasing unnecessary doctor's visits and charges to Medicare.

Like many others in the pharmacy workforce, as a consumer myself and on behalf of my many disgruntled customers, I feel that much more needs to be done to prevent such situations from occurring. And the TGA needs to have a "closer" finger on the pulse. Put simply, it results in a massive workload for everyone involved, consumer, doctors and most significantly, the pharmacist. The amount of man-hours required of the pharmacist is astronomical and is goes completely unrewarded! With such scenarios, it is unsurprising why many pharmacists are feeling dissatisfied with their jobs.

Most importantly, such situations can be simply addressed by the pharmacist (such as a change in formulation in this case, XR to IR metformin). This is an extremely powerful example of why pharmacists should have an influence on prescribing. Legislation needs to be changed to allow pharmacists to make the appropriate prescribing changes to prevent such a ridiculous, unnecessary expense and burden on our already stressed health system. This is something I hope the Pharmacy Guild of Australia pursues with government and is clearly something heavily supported by the Australian public, particularly in situations such as these.

Yours sincerely,

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