

# Lessons from the IV Supply Shortage: Delivering Safe and Effective Patient Care in Challenging Times



By Marie Garcia RN, OCN, Director of Clinical Operations, Virginia Cancer Specialists, PC

Since Hurricane Maria made landfall in September 2017, the aftermath has been felt by many—perhaps most surprisingly healthcare providers and patients well outside the devastation locally in Puerto Rico. Damage from the hurricane intensified an already difficult shortage of medical equipment for many medical facilities and hospitals across the U.S., including IV bags used daily to deliver lifesaving medications to patients.

Recognizing the potential for patient care challenges that can come with a significant reduction in supply of IV bags, Virginia Cancer Specialists (VCS), located near Washington DC, proactively worked with their vendor of elastomeric pumps to find a solution to ensure safe, effective patient care through an ongoing shortage. This included introducing new approaches to care using a disposable, portable infusion system (the Avanos Medical Homepump Eclipse\*) to provide chemotherapy and pre-medications to their patients allowing them to minimize disruption to their facility and continue the care for patients.

In this article, Marie A. Garcia RN OCN, director of clinical operations for Virginia Cancer Specialists provides guidance and key considerations for other medical organizations regarding how to successfully deliver patient care during an ongoing product shortage, including:

**WEIGHING CONVENIENCE** - There will sometimes be perceived tradeoffs when using a new product initially, but it's important to consider the long-term potential benefits. For example, when VCS introduced new technology for medication delivery, nurses actually saved time, as they no longer needed to mix their own solutions.

**ACCOUNT FOR VARIABILITY** - When you introduce a new product, time will be spent learning the product's nuances and adjusting to potentially different functionality. To that end, VCS proactively adjusted infusion schedules in anticipation of using the new technology.

**MAINTAIN COMMUNICATION WITH PATIENTS AND COLLEAGUES** - While replacing one product for another had little impact on VCS' patients, the facility provided updates early and often so that patients would hear from their providers, first, about how their needs were going to be met, rather than learning of the shortage in the media. VCS also maintained ongoing communication with vendors and relevant industry associations to ensure they were up-to-date on information needed to work proactively and collaboratively during the shortage.

**CONSIDER THE FUTURE** - Product shortages are a reality in the healthcare industry, so considering how solutions or processes introduced during the shortage can be incorporated post-shortage makes sense. VCS has viewed, first hand, the benefits of the Eclipse with certain chemotherapy and pre-meds and plans to continue using it post-shortage.

There are inherent risks in all medical devices. Please refer to the product labeling for **Indications, Cautions, Warnings and Contraindications**. Failure to follow the product labeling could directly impact patient safety. Physician is responsible for prescribing and administering medications per instructions provided by the drug manufacturer. Refer to [www.avanosmedicaldevices.com](http://www.avanosmedicaldevices.com) for additional product safety Technical Bulletins.

For more information for clinicians and product code ordering information, please visit: [avanosmedicaldevices.com](http://avanosmedicaldevices.com)  
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