Comprehensive Pharmacy Services Advises Hospitals To Plan for a Protracted Intravenous Saline Shortage

Largest Hospital Pharmacy Services Provider Issues Advisory to Over 400 Facilities Nationwide

Memphis, TN – January 31, 2014: Comprehensive Pharmacy Services (CPS), the nation’s largest pharmacy services provider, issued an advisory to its more than 400 hospitals and health systems clients throughout the country to prepare for a protracted intravenous (IV) saline shortage, and provided a three-part plan to help them manage the critical shortage.

“We’ve been doing this for 40 years, and we don’t see a clearly defined end to the current intravenous saline shortage so we are calling on the healthcare facilities we serve to take immediate action to help effectively manage through this crisis,” said Marvin Finnefrock, Pharm. D., Divisional Vice President for Clinical Services. “It can’t be business as usual because the shortage is lasting longer than expected, so hospitals have to immediately focus energy, beyond finding the scarce supply, on managing what they have and engaging in thoughtful measures to best serve their patients.”

Dr. Finnefrock explained that the IV saline shortage is particularly concerning because it is one of the most commonly used drugs in patient treatments. “As other avenues are pursued, such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) working with the manufacturers to step up production or the federal government releasing some emergency stockpiles, those solutions have hurdles and are well outside the control of healthcare providers, so they need to take matters into their own hands, as well,” Dr. Finnefrock added.

CPS is advising that medical, nursing and pharmacy staff work together on a three-part approach to manage through the IV saline shortage:

1. **Conservation:** Immediately conduct a wastage review in all areas where IV saline is routinely used without a specific direct indication, for example, in elective procedural areas and emergency departments, and set up basic guidelines leading to conservation of a limited resource.
2. **Substitution:** Hospitals should put in place plans for adequate substitution regimens as indicated, in case the shortage worsens or lasts for a prolonged period of time. This, however, requires careful oversight from a qualified pharmacy and clinician team to safely and effectively use substitutions on a patient-by-patient basis.
3. **Communication:** Implement a timely communication plan to all clinical staff involved in ordering or administering IV saline, keeping them informed of the status of the shortage and supplies available to the facility. The goal of the communication is to engage staff in conservation efforts and keep them informed of actions planned by clinical leadership to mitigate shortage challenges.

**About Comprehensive Pharmacy Services:**
Employing over 1,800 pharmacy professionals, CPS is the nation’s largest provider of pharmacy services to more than 400 hospitals and healthcare facilities leading to sustainable improved quality and reduced cost. CPS services include pharmacy consulting, inpatient and outpatient pharmacy management, telepharmacy and transition of care services. For more information, visit www.cpspharm.com.

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