



CANADIAN ANESTHESIOLOGISTS' SOCIETY
Société canadienne des anesthésiologistes

CAS Medication Shortage Bulletin: Ketamine Hydrochloride February 2023

Dear CAS members,

As you are likely aware, we are experiencing a shortage of Sandoz Ketamine Hydrochloride that will impact supplies across Canada. This shortage is due to a quality control concern that is currently under investigation. Because of this concern there is uncertainty as to when production will resume.

Given ketamine's unique pharmacokinetic properties which confer benefits not only as a sedative medication but also as an analgesic, bronchodilator, and anesthesia induction agent for hemodynamically unstable patients, the CAS has met with Health Canada to express the significant clinical impact of this medication shortage, both upon the operating room and across hospital units such as ICU, ER and stand-alone sedation suites. As a result, the Drug Shortages unit at Health Canada has categorized this as a Tier 3 shortage (highest level of concern) and is already exploring the availability of a foreign authorized supply for importation. However, this will take time and ultimately may not prove feasible if suitable formulations cannot be sourced.

We are aware that some hospitals have already begun to conserve 2ml 50mg/ml vials, however, it is possible current stocks will not outlast delays in return to manufacture. We therefore ask CAS members to consider the following measures:

1. Please share this bulletin with colleagues. We encourage individuals, departments and those in leadership positions to actively engage with local pharmacy and hospital leadership to ensure this message reaches as many colleagues as possible.
2. If you work in a unit where you do not receive regular communications and updates from Pharmacy about drug shortages and replacements, please reach out to your local Pharmacy colleagues about this current issue with Ketamine. If communication and updates via Pharmacy is not feasible please consider taking ownership of this latest shortage and disseminating this report and all subsequent updates amongst colleagues, units and local hospitals.
3. We ask for ongoing vigilance on your part when working with Ketamine. Please remember to check the vial you are about to use as the concentration / formulation in stock may have changed. It is possible some 2ml vials will contain 100 mgs Ketamine

where you previously accessed the 2ml 20mg supply. It is also possible that any new supply or formulation of ketamine may introduce potential for look-alike drug errors.

4. In conjunction with hospital pharmacies and/or health authority we encourage you to actively and pre-emptively explore conservation strategies that work within local perioperative contexts. Please consider those patients who absolutely need or benefit from ketamine versus those in whom it is a useful adjunct and where viable alternatives are freely available.

We hope that these measures will help reduce the clinical impact of this medication shortage. The CAS will remain in contact with Health Canada and keep you informed of any new developments as they arise.



Conor Mc Donnell MD MB
Chair, CAS Quality & Patient Safety Committee ~~Chair~~



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