



Why Should Plasma-derived Medicinal Products Be Treated Differently?—A LOOK AT GERMANY

BY SÁNDOR TOTH, SENIOR MANAGER, GERMANY, PPTA

Germany is a country where one could assume that the health care system is in good shape, everything is well-organized, and patient access to care is secured. Generally speaking, this is true. However, beginning in 2011, medicine shortages have occurred in multiple therapeutic areas, including vaccines and cancer drugs; the issue is still not solved. As such, drug shortages are increasingly on the political agenda in Germany, as well as throughout Europe.

There are multiple reasons for supply issues, some of which were identified and described in 2011 by the German “Arznei-Telegramm,” a service that is known to be critical of the pharmaceutical industry¹, as well as by other entities. These reasons include:

“Complex, highly susceptible manufacturing processes, centralization of production, purchase of raw materials or finished medicinal products in countries with insufficiently

controlled production facilities, long transport routes, economic strategies, etc.”

The article describes rebate contracts between manufacturers and insurance companies as a “very Germany-specific reason for supply issues.” In the case of only one supplier “rapidly increasing demand ... inevitably leads to problems.”

The authors called for an information system, where manufacturers would have to report supply issues that would inform about alternatives for unavailable drugs.

After the publication of the article, several measures have been taken to increase transparency of the drug supply chain and to secure patients’ access to medicines, such as:

- Since 2013, a list of “supply shortages of medicinal products for human use” has been published by the Federal Institute for Drugs and Medical Devices.