



# Making the Most of Your Omnicell System to Help Manage Drug Shortages

Omnicell recognizes the challenges to your pharmacy and nursing operations as drug shortages continue to increase. A recent article in Forbes magazine stated, "In 2011, there were a record-high 267 new prescription drug shortages."<sup>1</sup> Each of these shortages frustrates pharmacy and nursing staff, affects productivity, and more importantly, can impact patient care.

While we unfortunately cannot directly alleviate the shortages, we have put together a few helpful tips related to managing these issues via your Omnicell<sup>®</sup> automated medication dispensing system.

- Restock Management of a Shortage Item** – The Omnicell system processes restock orders based on quantity needed to meet the expected Par Level. If a drug shortage occurs, the Omnicell system will continue to request these medications to be filled to the cabinet. The restock order in the OmniCenter<sup>®</sup> server is based on a *route* – the source of these medications. To simplify the management of the drug shortages in your Omnicell cabinets, simply create a *Drug Shortage* route in the system. Then, initiate a process to change short items to this route to eliminate them from restocks. Here are the steps to follow:

1. Open the item in the database and edit the Restock Tab.
2. Edit the Re-Order Source to *Drug Shortage* or similar terminology.

3. When the medication becomes available again, change the Re-Order Source back to the original source. The medication will then re-order on the next restock.

- Notification of a Shortage** – The Omnicell 12.0 and above software features an option to include a log-in message for the user at the OmniRx<sup>®</sup> cabinet. This option could be used to inform nurses of any shortages. The message is displayed facility-wide when a user logs in to the system. This setting is accessed in the OmniCenter server, under Administration → Security Setup → Log in Screen Setup.
- Equivalent Dosing** – Pharmacy can set up the cabinets to make it easier for nurses to find alternative doses of medications that come in multiple strengths, when a particular strength is unavailable. Upon issuing the medication that is out of stock, the nurse will be prompted to see which other doses are available to fulfill the medication order. Note that this feature is not appropriate if nurses are doing bedside bar code verification of medications.
- Dispensing Alerts** – If a drug shortage causes you to stock an alternate strength and/or volume of a medication, you can use Dispensing Alerts to provide a visual cue to nurses that the product may be different than the usual. For example, if you previously stored Ketorolac 30 mg vials, but can only purchase 60 mg vials, a dispensing alert could provide an additional cue to the nurse that the size is different.
- OmniDispenser<sup>®</sup> Unit-Dose Dispensing Module** – The OmniDispenser module is designed to accommodate many different pills, vials, and carpujects sizes. During a shortage, medications may be substituted frequently and different brands may use varying package sizes and types. Therefore, it is important that the correct canister be used in the OmniDispenser to accommodate the medication package. Be sure to validate that items are inserted into the right canister size. A sizing chart for OmniDispenser is available to assist you. If your pharmacy does not already have this chart, contact your Omnicell service representative to obtain a chart.
- Omni Inventory Report** – This is one of the standard OmniCenter reports located under the Reports Tab, Operational drop-down. Use the Omni Inventory Report to find inventory in cabinets where the item is not being utilized. In other words, the report can help you find existing product and redistribute the inventory to the appropriate areas

Please contact your Omnicell representative if you have questions or suggestions for additional tips we can share with others!

<sup>1</sup>. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/dougschoen/2012/02/13/the-drug-shortage-crisis-in-america/>