



# Northwest Community EMS System

Date: January 4, 2012

**System Memo: # 334**

To: All Chiefs/EMS CEOs; Provider EMSCs, Hospital EMSCs/Educators  
Paramedics and ECRNs

From: John M. Ortinau, M.D., FACEP  
EMS Medical Director

RE: **Drug shortages and approved options**

The country has been experiencing a large number of drug shortages and backorders over the past several months that have required a somewhat flexible approach to our ambulance stocking.

Thank you for your cooperation and patience as we take all necessary steps to maintain at least minimal inventories for drugs that have become difficult or impossible for hospital pharmacies to get on a timely basis or in our normal packaging/dose amounts due to manufacturing delays or increased market demand. For example, American Regent had temporarily suspended manufacture of most drug products in April, 2011 and plans to begin shipping some drugs again in March of 2012 and others by June.

#### Drugs on our watch list:

- Atropine Injection
- Diazepam (Valium) Injection
- Diphenhydramine (Benadryl) Injection
- Fentanyl Injection
- Magnesium Sulfate Injection
- Midazolam (Versed) Injection
- Morphine Sulfate Injection
- Ondansetron (Zofran) Injection

#### System response plan:

- Pull inventories of all the above drugs from reserve vehicles or agency stockpiles and return to your designated hospital for use on front-line ALS ambulances.
- Use reasonable caution in handling these drugs to minimize breakage or waste.
- **FENTANYL:** Very little 100 mcg in 2 mL ampules or vials are available. Several hospitals are only able to replace 250 mcg/ in 5 mL. Given that this is the same concentration as our original packaging, it is an acceptable way to stock the drug. Morphine is also on back order so is not a viable alternative. For the present time – we are modifying the ambulance inventory to the following:

**ALS ambulances may not stock less than a total of 100 mcg and not more than 300 mcg of Fentanyl in a 50 mcg/1 mL concentration.** Any combination of packaging that falls within these boundaries is acceptable. Adjust the controlled substance log as needed to accurately indicate the amount of drug being carried.

- **MIDAZOLAM:** Valium is also on backorder and Ativan needs refrigeration, so we have very limited alternatives. Some hospitals have midazolam 5 mg/1 mL stock that is due to expire in January 2012. We have received approval to use this expired midazolam during the shortage if necessary.
- **ONDANSETRON:** If injectable drug cannot be replaced, use the oral dissolve tablets until both formulations are available again.

We are told that an impending shortage of **ETOMIDATE** may be looming. We've requested that all hospital EMSCs ask their pharmacies to put in a store of this drug now and hold for EMS needs. We'll keep you posted as things change.