

How a Caribbean Hurricane Is Impacting US Hospitals Months Later

OSF HealthCare Newsroom

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The devastation caused by hurricane Maria is still being felt across Puerto Rico and other parts of the Caribbean and will be for years. About 60% of the U-S territory is still without electricity with thousands of people living in shelters.

Nearly two months later, after affects from the hurricane are also being felt at medical centers across the United States. Puerto Rico is where 13 of the 20 major manufacturers for health care-related items are located, including the major suppliers of intravenous (IV) solutions.

SOT JERRY STORM, Senior Vice President Pharmacy, OSF HealthCare

(Even before the hurricane went through a second major supplier that generates 20% of the IV solutions, their factory went down with a fire in it. Then the hurricane came along and took away another 60% so the factories up and operating on emergency power as we speak but it's only about 25% capacity. So we lost basically 80% of our sources of IV solutions in a matter of a few weeks :32)

V/O: The end result of this is a national shortage of all IV solution bags, along with supplies used to dilute medications for patients. Intravenous solutions are used to administer different medications, including antibiotic's, and impacts all areas of surgery.

As head of pharmacy operations for OSF HealthCare in Peoria, Illinois, Jerry Storm says he has never seen a drug shortage to this magnitude in his 40 years of pharmacy experience. Storm says his team has implemented practice changes to manage the shortage.

SOT JERRY STORM, Senior Vice President Pharmacy, OSF HealthCare

(Our goal is that this is invisible to the patient that we're able to make practice changes behind the scenes with working with the providers as a team between nursing and in the actual physicians and all medical staff providers and help provide them alternatives to a practice that they're been doing for years as giving an IV that goes another day longer other it's OK. Now, if that patient can come of an IV fluid and start taking oral fluids then we will transition them as quickly as possible as long as it's safe for the patient. :44)

V/O:

Storm says hospitals across the country are dealing with the IV shortage. A major supplier has gotten Federal Drug Administration approval to ship product from European plants to the U-S, but while every little bit helps, those plants don't have enough bandwidth to meet the needs of the United States.

The shortage is expected to last through the end of the year, possibly into January 2018.