

# DEALING WITH INCREASING MEDICINE SHORTAGES: USE OF DIGITAL PLATFORM TO EASE THE HANDLING IN PHARMACY PRACTICES (KNMP FARMANCO)

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## INTRODUCTION

Internationally, medicine shortages cause increasing concern. For patients it may impose a significant effect on their safe use of medication. For pharmacists (and physicians) it is time-consuming to get trustworthy information. In 2004 the Royal Dutch Pharmacists Association (KNMP) launched the platform Farmanco: [www.farmanco.knmp.nl](http://www.farmanco.knmp.nl). It provides pharmacists with up to date information on medicine shortages in The Netherlands and how to handle them.

## AIMS

Providing pharmacists with trustworthy information on medicine shortages and providing them with possibilities for solutions.

## METHOD

On the digital platform a medicine shortage can be reported by industry or pharmacists. The definition used (by KNMP) to describe a medicine shortage is as follows: medicines are not available nationwide and the shortage is likely to last longer than 14 days (verified with suppliers) (figure 1).

Based on the report, the manufacturer is contacted for an analysis of the problem such as reason for the shortage. Within 24 hours of the report, information is provided on the platform about the cause and the duration of the shortage and possibilities for solutions. An advice on a pharmaceutical alternative, import or pharmacy preparation is usually published afterwards. The solutions are investigated sequentially:

- Substitution: same active ingredient and dosage form;
- Pharmaceutical alternative: other active ingredient, replaceable based on therapeutic standards;
- Import: product from another country (EU, United Kingdom or MRA countries);
- Pharmacy preparation.

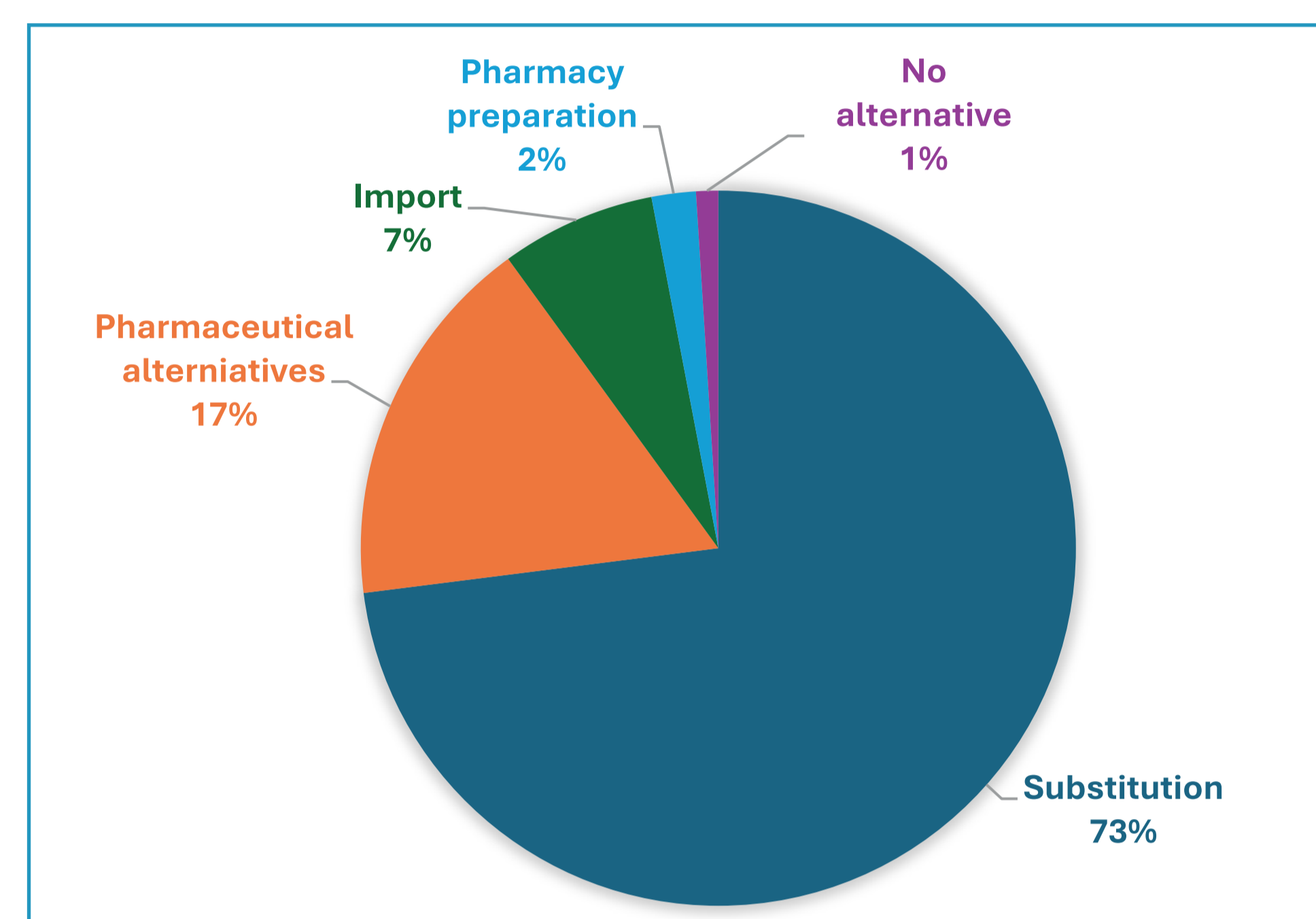
Figure 1: Homepage of KNMP Farmanco



## RESULTS

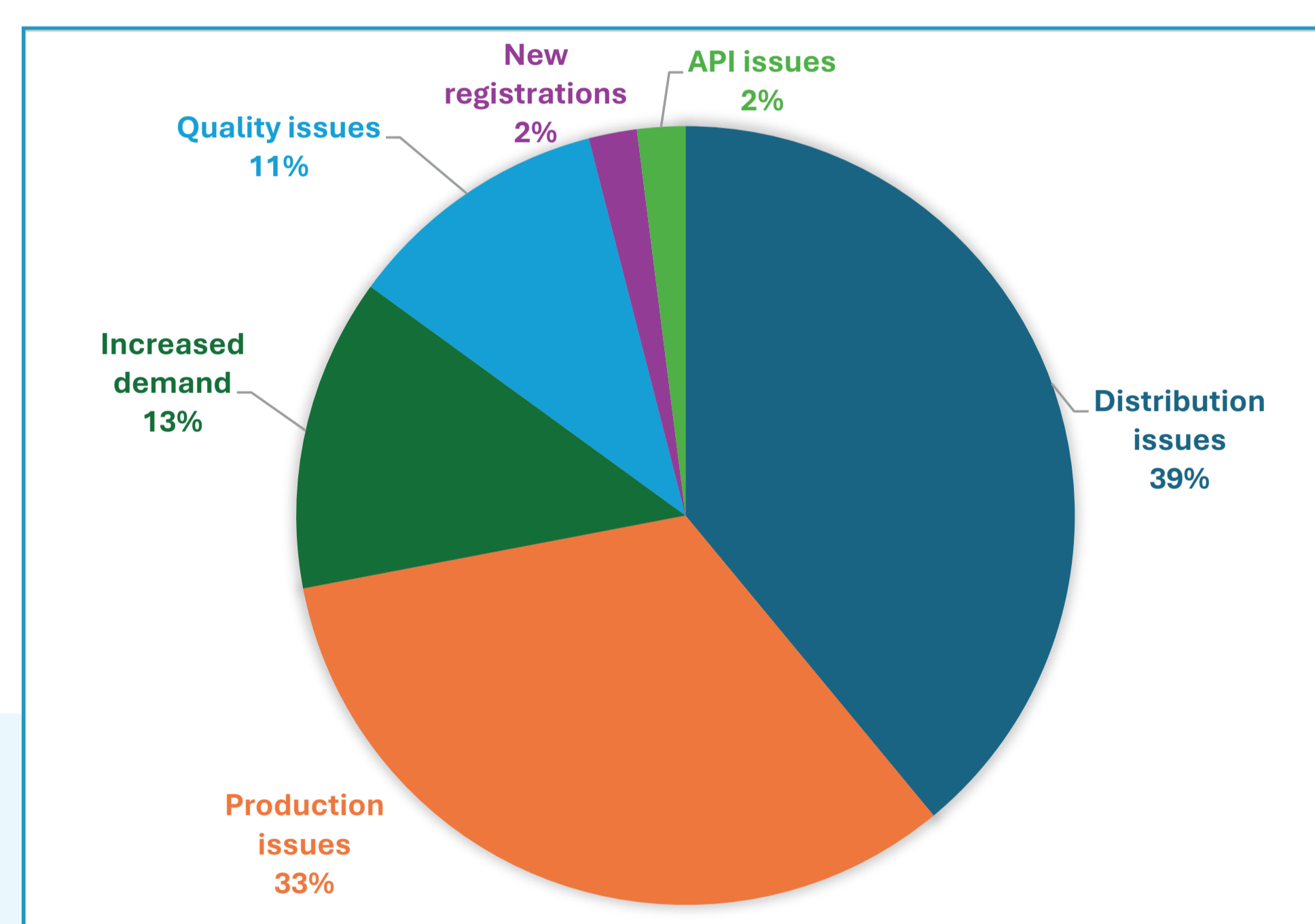
There are currently more than 1000 active medicine shortage cases on the platform. The number of medicine shortages has increased from 1514 in 2022, to 2292 shortages in 2023. The average duration of shortages has also increased from 91 days (2022) to 107 days (2023). Almost 73% of the shortages in 2023 can be remedied by a medicine with the same active substance. 17% of the shortages were remedied by pharmaceutical alternatives, 7% by import and 2% by pharmacy preparation. For less than 1% of the shortages, no alternative is available at all (figure 2).

Figure 2: Solutions for medicine shortages in 2023 (patient level)



The cause of almost half of the shortages has not been specified by the manufacturer. 39% of shortages with a known cause are temporarily unavailable due to distribution problems. Other known causes of shortages are production issues, quality issues, increased demand, API issues and new registrations (figure 3).

Figure 3: known causes of shortages in 2023



## CONCLUSION

The developed platform provides trustworthy information and practical advices on medicine shortages for pharmacists. This helps pharmacists to deal with the increasing numbers of medicine shortages every day by providing several solution possibilities.



For [Farmanco.knmp.nl](http://Farmanco.knmp.nl), scan the QR-code. Please note that the website is in Dutch.