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## Specialty Spotlight

### Drug Price Increases Since 2007 – Outrageous?

Medication prices have dramatically increased over the years as the U.S. Pharmaceutical Industry is one of the few to still have pricing power.

Drug Name	Treatment Category	Manufacturer	Percent of Price Increase	Total 2013 Sales
Xyrem (sodium oxybate)	Narcolepsy	Jazz Pharma	841%	\$569 million
Humulin (regular insulin)	Diabetes	Eli Lilly	354%	\$1.3 billion
Premarin (conjugated estrogens)	Menopausal Symptoms	Pfizer	257%	\$1.1 billion
Epi-Pen (epinephrine)	Anaphylaxis	Mylan	222%	\$829 million
Lunesta (eszopiclone)	Sleep Disorder	Sunovion	170%	\$432 million
Benicar (olmesartan)	High Blood Pressure	Daiichi Sankyo	164%	\$3.1 billion
Lantus (insulin glargine)	Diabetes	Sanofi	160%	\$7.93 billion
Copaxone (glatiramer)	Multiple Sclerosis (MS)	Teva	157%	\$5.5 billion
Gleevec (imatinib)	Blood cancers	Novartis	158%	\$4.693 billion

#### **Commentary:**

The price hikes implemented by the Pharmaceutical Industry are basically being done to overcome the cost that was put into developing the drugs, including a profit from their development. However, without restrictions the price hikes have continued and

companies are trying to take advantage of whatever time they have left on their patents. As these price hikes make it hard for patients to obtain the necessary treatments, they do have alternative therapy options and opportunities to participate in copay assistance if provided by the manufacturer.

Sources: <http://www.fiercepharmamarketing.com/story/10-big-brands-keep-pumping-out-big-bucks-little-help-price-hikes/2014-05-07>

Find out more

## Why is Everyone Vitamin D Deficient?

Currently, there is an increasing trend for testing vitamin D levels as a preventive measure, while there is also an associated increase in diagnoses of patients with vitamin D deficiency due to its high cut-off level for normal levels. **The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recently established that currently there is insufficient evidence to assess the benefits and harms of screening for vitamin D deficiency in asymptomatic adults.** The exact threshold defining vitamin D deficiency is not well-established and the association between its deficiency and health outcomes is unclear at the moment. The current practice of measuring 25-(OH)D level has not been validated as the appropriate target for measurement, while there exists a wide array of measurement methods that vary in their sensitivity (false negative) and specificity (false positive) rates. Unnecessary screening may lead to misclassification of deficiency and over-treatment of patients..

### **Commentary:**

Although there currently isn't enough evidence to support screening for vitamin D deficiency for the general public, the risks of vitamin D deficiency are real in high risk populations. People with obesity, darker skin pigmentation, low vitamin-D intake and those living at high latitudes with low exposure to sunlight, should still be tested. On the other hand, over-treatment with vitamin D can also cause rare but harmful toxicity such as hypercalcemia and kidney stones. The bottom line is that there is not enough evidence to test the general public for their vitamin levels and treat asymptomatic adults.

Source: LeFevre, M. (2014). *Screening for Vitamin D Deficiency in Adults: U.S.*

## Is My Flu Shot Working?

According to a new announcement by the United States Center for Disease Control (CDC), the influenza virus has mutated and is no longer covered by the current vaccine. H3N2 is the most common strain of the virus this year and is known to cause more severe influenza illness, hospitalizations, and deaths. Since the current vaccine is less effective, it may lead to a more severe flu season.

### **Commentary:**

The flu virus is always mutating and for this very reason a new vaccine is introduced and given to patients every year. Although the current vaccine may not cover the specific H3N2 virus that is common this year, it is still effective against other strains such as H1N1, therefore patients should still be receiving the vaccine.

It is especially important for high risk populations to receive their yearly vaccine because they are at an increased risk of severe complications leading to hospitalization. These populations include patients with chronic conditions (i.e asthma, COPD, heart disease, etc), adults 65 years of age or older, young children, and pregnant women. Additional preventative actions should be taken by all: avoiding close contact, covering your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing, thoroughly washing your hands with soap and water, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose, or mouth in order to avoid spreading any germs.

Source:

<http://www.pharmacist.com/flu-season-just-got-worse>

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/han/han00374.asp>



## Pro Pharma Announces Their Spring Educational Series

Pro Pharma Pharmaceutical Consultants, Inc. has announced today that it will host a new Spring Educational Series comprised of expertly crafted webinars. The first of which will be held on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015 entitled “Specialty Medication in Today’s Healthcare Environment,” presented Dr. Craig Stern.

Dr. Stern holds a Doctor of Pharmacy and a Masters of Business Administration from the University of Southern California (USC). Dr. Stern is also a fellow of the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy (AMCP), Editor of the California Pharmacist Association Journal (CPhA), as well as President of Pro Pharma Pharmaceutical Consultants, Inc. (<http://www.propharmaconsultants.com/about-us/biographies/>)

This free webinar will take place on Wednesday, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015 from 9:30 to 10:30 AM (PST) and will include a forty-five minute (45) presentation followed by a fifteen (15) minute Q & A session via Go To Meeting.

### Webinar Outline:

- Coding Logic
- Claim Adjudication Rules & Requirements
- Pricing Issues, Utilization Testing
- Pre-Certification Testing
- Contract Considerations

Register at: <http://www.propharmaconsultants.com/webinar-registration>

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Find out more →

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Pro Pharma Pharmaceutical Consultants, Inc.  
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