

Big Pharma's Exorbitant Cancer Drug Prices Are Due to Corrupt Monopolies, Not Development Costs, Study Shows

By [J. D. Heyes](#)

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Authors of a new report published online in *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* say that dramatically higher prices for cancer medications are beginning to have a negative effect on patient care in the U.S., as well as the American health care system overall.

"Americans with cancer pay 50 percent to 100 percent more for the same patented drug than patients in other countries," wrote S. Vincent Rajkumar, M.D., of Mayo Clinic Cancer Center, one of the authors of the recently posted report. "As oncologists we have a moral obligation to advocate for affordable cancer drugs for our patients."

Rajkumar and a colleague, Hagop Kantarjian, M.D., of the MD Anderson Cancer Center, write that the average prices of cancer medications for about 12 months of treatment grew between \$5,000 and \$10,000 before the year 2000 to more than \$100,000 by 2012, or a 100-fold increase.

Over roughly the same period of time, the average American household income fell by about 8 percent, perhaps in large part to the Great Recession of 2008-09.

In their paper, the authors refute the primary arguments used by Big Pharma to justify such dramatic increases and continued high cost of cancer drugs, especially that it costs so much to conduct research and development of drugs, the comparative benefits to patients, that eventually market forces will equalize and stabilize prices, and that putting price controls on cancer medications would quash further R & D.

All rules favor Big Pharma

"One of the facts that people do not realize is that cancer drugs for the most part are not operating under a free market economy," wrote Rajkumar. "The fact that there are five approved drugs to treat an incurable [cancer](#) does not mean there is competition.

"Typically," he continued, "the standard of care is that each drug is used sequentially or in combination, so that each new drug represents a monopoly with exclusivity granted by patent protection for many years."

The authors go onto to say that there are other reasons for the high cost of cancer medications. Included among them is legislation that prevents Medicare from being permitted to negotiate drug prices (in a likely sop to [Big Pharma](#) political contributors) and a

lack of value-based pricing, which they say would attach the cost of a drug to its relative effectiveness in comparison with other medications.

But the authors recommended some solutions they believe would decrease [prices](#), some of which are already being utilized in other developed countries. They include:

- Permit Medicare to negotiate prices, because doing so would result in lower costs for taxpayers;
- Develop new cancer treatment guidelines and pathways that incorporate the cost and benefit of the drugs;
- Permit the Food and Drug Administration or doctor panels to make recommendations regarding prices that are based on a drug's sum benefit (value-based pricing);
- Get rid of “pay-for-delay” strategies that enable a Big Pharma company with a brand name [drug](#) to share profits with a generic drug maker for the duration of the patent period, thereby eliminating competition and any patent challenges (which keep prices artificially high);
- Allow drugs to be imported from abroad, for personal use;
- Empower cancer advocacy organizations like the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute to consider cost in any recommendations;
- Build patient-driven grassroots networks and groups that can advocate effectively for cancer patient interests, in order to balance the overt and overwhelming influence of Big Pharma companies, insurance firms, pharmacies and hospitals.

Now, for a natural treatment...

And we would add even more recommendations, such as:

- Allow for equal presentation of evidence that cancer treatment alternatives to chemotherapy, radiation therapy and surgery exist and are effective in some patients;
- Give holistic physicians equal opportunity to compete for cancer patients;
- End the mainstream medical industry's campaign of disinformation and lies regarding holistic, natural and alternative cancer treatments.

You can see more of those treatments, and learn about the official duplicity behind keeping them hidden, [here](#).

Sources:

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<http://www.mayoclinicproceedings.org>

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