

Which drugs do we spend the most on?

Last week's newsletter featured a list of prescription drugs taken by the most number of **patients** in the U.S. This week, here's a list of the drugs ranked by **U.S. spending** (before discounts like manufacturer rebates). Not surprisingly, the list includes only brand name drugs, and three of them are "tumor necrosis factor alpha" inhibitors or blockers (Humira, Enbrel, and Remicade). TNF blocker drugs treat autoimmune conditions like rheumatoid arthritis (RA), Chron's, and ulcerative colitis. Click drug name to read patient ratings and reviews.

Top 8 Drugs in the U.S. by Amount Spent* (in billions)

Humira	\$13.6
(Chron's/RA)	
Harvoni	\$10.0
(hepatitis C)	
Enbrel	\$7.4
(rheumatoid arthritis)	
Lantus	\$5.7
(diabetes)	
Remicade	\$5.3
(Chron's/RA)	
Januvia	\$4.8
(type 2 diabetes)	
Advair Diskus	\$4.7
(asthma)	
Lyrica	\$4.4
(nerve pain, anxiety)	

*2016, before manufacturer discounts
HDA 2017-2018 Fact Book/IQVIA

Recent News about Legal Actions Related to Drug Prices for Insulin and Generic Drugs

"The Sick Paying for the Healthy: How Insurance Companies Drive up Drug Prices"

This article looks at the consequences of behind-the-scenes drug pricing and payments, including generous rebates received by pharmacy benefit managers and insurance companies. "Patient advocates say this system creates perverse incentives that push the price of drugs like insulin through the roof." These incentives may not benefit the consumer, and patients with cheaper insurance plans have found it increasingly difficult to purchase their insulin. Read more about how the pricing and payment system works and the class action law suit in Truthout's [March 15 article](#).

"Generic Drug Price Conspiracy Case Grows as 47 States and the DOJ Widen Their Investigation"

Many generic drugs had price spikes of over 200% and even as much as 8000% between 2013 and 2014.

Why? The attorneys general and DOJ are charging that a "cozy" atmosphere within the industry allowed for opportunities for price fixing and contrived bidding processes. AskaPatient's [March 11 article](#) about this topic includes a chart of generic drugs with associated price increases.

Here are this week's health care news highlights from AskaPatient:

- Even slightly elevated blood sugar can increase risk of heart and kidney problems. <http://ow.ly/ujnX30j14wZ> (03-19-18)
- Greater grip strength is associated with better heart structure and function. <http://ow.ly/lymS30j14xf> (03-19-18)
- Researchers combine normal muscle cell with Duchenne muscular dystrophy cell to improve muscle function in mouse model. <http://ow.ly/Rfpj30j14xy> (03-19-18)
- A simple tweak to a small-molecule drug could lead to a highly effective flu treatment. <http://ow.ly/hkGs30j2DN3> (03-20-18)
- High levels of omega-6 fatty acids appear to protect against cardiovascular disease and premature death, new study finds. <http://ow.ly/IQdm30j2DNQ> (03-20-18)

- Tiny implantable sensor can transmit health data to a cell phone, maker seeking U.S. approval. <http://ow.ly/P6ZB30j2DPa> (03-20-18)
- Why do so many adults avoid and procrastinate when it comes to the shingles vaccine? <http://ow.ly/LufQ30j4bFD> (03-21-18)
- Two new drugs demonstrate advantage over steroids for treating muscular dystrophy. <http://ow.ly/5rga30j4bOp> (03-21-18)
- Hydrogel developed at Rice University speeds wound healing in diabetics significantly faster than another commercial gel. <http://ow.ly/s4Nv30j4bZq> (03-21-18)
- Researchers propose low-tech, cheap solutions to improving municipal water quality. <http://ow.ly/BvCR30j4cal> (03-22-18)
- Fall injuries in elderly patients have increased over the past 20 years, but a study suggests outcomes have improved. <http://ow.ly/cpwl30j4cjk> (03-22-18)
- Giving men with suspected prostate cancer an MRI scan could save thousands of lives a year, study suggests. <http://ow.ly/9UtX30j5xZO> (03-22-18)
- Obesity dulls your sense of taste, but taste can be restored by losing weight, study finds. <http://ow.ly/opkp30j6MiA> (03-23-18)
- Tiny sensor mounted on tooth can monitor sugar, salt, and alcohol intake and transmit the information wirelessly. <http://ow.ly/IL6K30j6PxE> (03-23-18)
- A healthier diet improves depressive symptoms significantly more than a social support group. <http://ow.ly/8x8q30j6PFx> (03-23-18)
- Losing sleep not only makes fat loss harder but also more likely to lose muscle mass, according to small experiment. <http://ow.ly/u7Z530j8eK9> (03-24-18)
- Scientists use findings from the 1970's about fetal skin regeneration to develop wound dressing that accelerates healing. <http://ow.ly/2qL730j8eKj> (03-24-18)
- A blueberry muffin can contain more than a day's worth of sugar, an example of how easy it is to eat too much sugar. <http://ow.ly/iTK230j8eOl> (03-24-18)

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