

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

- Detectable signs of diabetes may begin 20 years before an actual diagnosis. <http://ow.ly/yV0S30m8sei> (10-08-18)
- CDC tests Texas pool for brain-eating amoeba that killed a 29-year-old man. <http://ow.ly/yJCb30m8siO> (10-08-18)
- Researchers develop a vaccine platform that allows vaccines to be made cheaper and stored at room temperature for years. <http://ow.ly/wRPh30m8smn> (10-08-18)
- Brown University analysis estimates cost of nonfatal injuries in the U.S. at \$1.8 trillion, most of which was from loss of quality of life. <http://ow.ly/MkKP30m9tTO> (10-09-18)
- Deadly funnel-web spider venom can kill melanoma cancer cells and may become the basis of a new cancer treatment. <http://ow.ly/AVKR30m9tVe> (10-09-18)
- Rare, polio-like paralyzing disorder affecting children on the rise, CDC says. <http://ow.ly/GwDP30m9ueW> (10-09-18)
- Scoliosis has an unclear cause, but some scientists now think it could be due to an inability to use a certain mineral. <http://ow.ly/agdd30masxX> (10-10-18)
- Biodegradable wireless device speeds healing of damaged nerves before absorbing into the body. <http://ow.ly/pACI30masBb> (10-10-18)
- Expert urges change to prescription practices to reduce growing levels of antidepressants found in the environment. <http://ow.ly/vXbD30masHu> (10-10-18)
- FDA expands approval for HPV vaccine Gardasil 9 to men and women ages 27 through 45 years. <http://ow.ly/CRu730mbtBX> (10-11-18)
- Civil suit brings the total that AmerisourceBergen Corp. must pay to \$885 million for double billing, repackaging drugs for illicit sale, and more. <http://ow.ly/wc4T30mbu2n> (10-11-18)
- Johns Hopkins report highlights 15 emerging technologies that could help prevent global biological catastrophes. <http://ow.ly/KnRF30mbu83> (10-11-18)
- AbbVie sued over kickback scheme and using nurses to boost refills of its drug Humira, generating \$1.2 billion in sales. <http://ow.ly/qYHx30mburl> (10-12-18)
- Jury clears J&J of liability in the most recent of over ten thousand lawsuits involving the company's talc products. <http://ow.ly/NK3y30mcqMX> (10-12-18)
- California attributes aggressive tobacco control programs to 28 percent fewer lung cancer deaths among its residents. <http://ow.ly/so2V30mcqU6> (10-12-18)
- Number of toddlers not being vaccinated has quadrupled since 2001, CDC says. <http://ow.ly/jw5y30mcr1i> (10-13-18)
- Flu shots reduce hospital visits for expecting mothers by 40 percent as well as conferring protection to newborns. <http://ow.ly/KyUI30mdma5> (10-13-18)

**From AskaPatient: Always ask your pharmacist if cash price is cheaper than your co-pay**

In a study described in the March 2018 issue of **JAMA**, researchers analyzed around 9 million randomly selected insurance claims for commonly prescribed drugs. They compared patient co-pay amounts with what the likely price would have been if the patient had paid out-of-pocket. In over **one-fourth** of the claims for generic drugs, patients paid more than the cash price. With brand name drugs, patients were **less likely** to pay too much since the out-of-pocket cash price exceeded the co-pay only about six percent of the time. But the amount of

the over-payments for brand names was larger: on average, about \$13.46 per claim, compared with an average over-payment of \$7.69 for generics.

Some states (such as Florida and Ohio) have already passed legislation banning the so-called "gag order," a situation where pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) prohibit pharmacists from telling patients if the cash price for a drug is cheaper than an insurance co-pay. Historically, if pharmacists violated this gag order, then the pharmacy might lose its contract with the PBM. Now, patients in all states will benefit from more transparency in drug pricing. On October 10, President Trump signed into law the [Patient Right to Know Drug Prices Act, S.2554](#) and the [Know the Lowest Price Act, S.2553](#).

Consumers should know that for states that don't already have a ban on the gag clause, the new law might not take effect until as late as 2020. In addition, the pharmacist might not automatically tell you that it is cheaper to pay out-of-pocket; you will need to ask. Also, when you pay out-of-pocket for your prescription, the expense might not apply to your deductible. However, if you have a health savings account, those funds can still be used to pay for your prescriptions.

Here is a list of some of the generic drugs that the JAMA study looked at, along with the percentage of claims in which patients paid more than the cash price.

<b>Common Rx Drugs in the U.S. and Frequency of Claims with Over-payment by Patient</b>	
<b>Generic Drug</b>	<b>Percentage of claims overpaid</b>
<a href="#">ATORVASTATIN CALCIUM</a> (high cholesterol/Lipitor brand name)	7%
<a href="#">LISINAPRIL</a> (high blood pressure)	48%
<a href="#">AMLODIPINE BESYLATE</a> (calcium channel blocker/Norvasc brand name)	59%
<a href="#">LEVOTHYROXINE SODIUM</a> (hypothyroid/Synthroid brand name)	42%
<a href="#">SIMVASTATIN</a> (high cholesterol/Zocor brand name)	52%
<a href="#">HYDROCODONE-ACETAMINOPHEN</a> (pain relief/Vicodin brand name)	36%
<a href="#">OMEPRAZOLE (Rx)</a> (GERD/Prilosec brand name)	11%
<a href="#">AZITHROMYCIN</a> (antibiotic/Zithromax brand name)	18%
<a href="#">AMOXICILLIN</a> (antibiotic/Augmentin brand name)	36%
<a href="#">SERTRALINE HCL</a> (antidepressant/Zoloft brand name)	47%

Percentage of claims based on 2013 claims data as referenced in JAMA study from Optum's Clinformatics Data Mart. Data overrepresents the age category of 21 to 64 years but are representative of male and female patients. Study cited below. Click drug name link to go to combined review summaries of patient satisfaction for the generic and brand versions of the drug. Brand names are common examples.

#### **Sources and More Reading:**

- [Press Release](#): "APhA applauds laws prohibiting PBM gag order." American Pharmacists Association. October 10, 2018.

- **JAMA Study**: Van Nuys K, Joyce G, Ribero R, Goldman DP. "Frequency and Magnitude of Co-payments Exceeding Prescription Drug Costs" [JAMA. 2018;319\(10\):1045-1047](#).

Contact AskaPatient at [admin@askapatient.com](mailto:admin@askapatient.com)  
Send newsletter feedback or suggestions to [AskaPatientNews@askapatient.com](mailto:AskaPatientNews@askapatient.com)  
Subscribe at <https://www.askapatient.com>  
[unsubscribe from this list](#)



Copyright © *\*|CURRENT\_YEAR|\** AskaPatient ®