

Ranking Member Cummings and Chairman Sanders Investigate Staggering Price Increases for Generic Drugs

On October 2, 2014, Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Member of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Senator Bernard Sanders, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Primary Health and Aging, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, sent letters to 14 drug manufacturers requesting information about the escalating prices of generic drugs used to treat everything from common medical conditions to life-threatening illnesses. Data was provided by the Healthcare Supply Chain Association (HSCA) on recent purchases by group purchasing organizations (GPOs) of ten generic drugs:

Drug	Use	Average Market Price Oct. 2013	Average Market Price April 2014	Average Percentage Increase
Doxycycline Hyclate (bottle of 500, 100 mg tablets)	antibiotic used to treat a variety of infections	\$20	\$1,849	8,281%
Albuterol Sulfate (bottle of 100, 2 mg tablets)	used to treat asthma and other lung conditions	\$11	\$434	4,014%
Glycopyrrolate (box of 10 0.2 mg/mL, 20 mL vials)	used to prevent irregular heartbeats during surgery	\$65	\$1,277	2,728%
Divalproex Sodium ER (bottle of 80, 500 mg tablets ER 24H)	used to prevent migraines and treat certain types of seizures	\$31	\$234	736%
Pravastatin Sodium (bottle of 500, 10 mg tablets)	used to treat high cholesterol and to prevent heart disease	\$27	\$196	573%
Neostigmine Methylsulfate (box of 10 1:1000 vials)	used in anesthesia to reverse the effects of some muscle relaxants	\$25	\$121	522%
Benazepril/Hydrochlorothiazide (bottle of 100, 20-25 mg tablets)	used to treat high blood pressure	\$34	\$149	420%
Drug	Use	Average Market Price Nov. 2012	Average Market Price Sept. 2014	Average Percentage Increase
Isuprel (box of 25, 0.2 mg/mL vials)	used to treat heart attacks and irregular heartbeat	\$916	\$4,489	390%
Nitropress (50 mg vial)	used to treat congestive heart failure and reduce blood pressure	\$44	\$215	388%
Drug	Use	Average Market Price Oct. 2012	Average Market Price June 2014	Average Percentage Increase
Digoxin (single tablet, 250 mcg)	used to treat irregular heartbeats and heart failure	\$0.11	\$1.10	884%

HSCA surveyed average costs paid by four GPOs from October 2013 to April 2014. One GPO provided percentage increases rather than price increases, so the average reflects additional price data not captured by the average market price increase. One GPO provided price information for January 2013 to April 2014. HSCA provided Digoxin prices from National Average Drug Acquisition Cost data maintained by the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services.