

SCHAKOWSKY RELEASES MORE EVIDENCE SHOWING PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES ARE GOUGING SENIOR CITIZENS

STUDY FINDS THAT SENIORS LIVING IN CHICAGO PAY ON AVERAGE

ONE AND HALF TIMES FOR SAME PRESCRIPTION DRUGS SOLD IN MEXICO & CANADA

CHICAGO, IL U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today released more evidence that shows that pharmaceutical companies are gouging uninsured senior citizens living in her district, which includes Chicago's Northwest side, Evanston, Niles, Skokie and Morton Grove.[] []

Schakowsky released a study that found uninsured seniors living in her district pay much higher prices for prescription drugs than they would pay for these same drugs in Canada and Mexico.[] Earlier this year, Schakowsky had released another study, which concluded that her uninsured constituents are paying on average more than double for prescription drugs than HMOs and insurance company customers.

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"Thirteen million older Americans with no prescription drug coverage are paying the highest price in the nation for their drugs, and are paying on average 80% more than customers in Canada and Mexico for the same drugs," Schakowsky said.[] "Each day, many are forced to make heart wrenching, quality of life decisions.[] Those seniors often have to decide between paying for food, rent, or electricity or filling their prescription," said Schakowsky, a member of the Government Reform Committee.[]

Schakowsky released a study that was performed at her request by the House Government Reform Committee minority staff. The study examined the pricing of the five brand name prescription drugs with the highest sales to the elderly in the United States.

The study found that uninsured seniors living in her district are paying on average 82% and 81% more for the same prescription drugs sold in Canada and Mexico, respectively.[] In the case of the prescription drug Prilosec, an uninsured senior buying the drug in Chicago will pay 263% more than a customer in Mexico.[]

Prescription

Drug

U.S. Dosage

and Form

Canadian

Price

Mexican

Price

Illinois

Price

Canada-Illinois

Price

Differential

Mexico-Illinois

Price

Differential

Percent

Dollar

Percent

Dollar

Zocor

(cholesterol)

5 mg, 60 tab.

\$46.17

\$67.65

\$105.75

129%

\$59.58

56%

\$38.10

Prilosec

(ulcer,heartburn)

20 mg, 30 cap.

\$55.10

\$32.10

\$116.63

112%

\$61.53

263%

\$84.53

Procardia XL

(heart)

30 mg, 100 tab.

\$74.25

\$76.60

\$128.81

73%

\$54.56

68%

\$52.21

Zoloft

(depression)

50 mg, 100 tab.

\$129.05

\$219.35

\$216.55

68%

\$87.50

- 1%

- \$2.80

Norvasc

(blood pressure)

5 mg, 90 tab.

\$89.91

\$99.32

\$116.50

30%

\$26.59

17%

\$17.18

Average Differential

82%

81%

In dollar terms, an uninsured senior would pay over \$680 for prescriptions for these five best-selling drugs for one dose, while a consumer in Canada would pay under \$400 -- a difference of more than \$280. A consumer in Mexico would pay under \$500 -- a difference of more than \$180.

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"This is what the drug companies are telling uninsured Chicago seniors living on fixed income -- take a trip to Mexico or Canada if you want to have your prescription filled at a reasonable price," Schakowsky said.

She added, "Pharmaceutical companies are enjoying record profits. That is why we must use the power of the federal government and follow the example of the Mexican and Canadian governments to set limits and negotiate fair drug prices for the uninsured, especially our seniors and persons with disabilities. It is time to put an end to this cruel case of price discrimination. The evidence is clear and indisputable."

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Schakowsky also called on Congress to pass H.R. 664, the Prescription Drug Fairness for Seniors Act. H.R. 664. The bill, which is cosponsored by 121 House members, would allow pharmacies to purchase drugs for Medicare beneficiaries at the same low prices available to the federal government and other favored customers, including HMOs and insurance companies.

Earlier this year, Schakowsky released another study performed by the Government Reform Committee's minority staff. The study found that seniors on Medicare and persons with disabilities who do not have prescription drug coverage are paying on average 114% more than drug companies' most favored customers, such as insurance companies, health maintenance organizations, and the federal government. The study also concluded that pharmaceutical companies, not drug stores, are responsible for the inflated prices being paid by seniors.