

Patients give voice to call for drug pricing transparency

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A Texas patient who takes medication for her heart every day wonders how drug prices are set. A Missouri man cannot understand why drugs that often cost so little to manufacture can be priced so highly. These are just two of the tales arising from a new website that aims to bring needed transparency to skyrocketing drug prices and give patients the opportunity to tell their stories.

Bills or medicine? Food or medicine? With prescription drug prices rising, patients are increasingly facing these kinds of dilemmas. From 2013 to 2015, out-of-pocket costs for prescription drugs rose 20 percent. And the recent 400-percent price increase for lifesaving EpiPens that came without any justification has caught Congressional attention from both sides of the aisle.

TruthinRx.org is an interactive website that lends an ear to patients who want to share their stories of how rising prices are affecting their health and finances. The grassroots campaign, launched this month by the AMA, will use patient and physician voices to urge Congress to take action on these growing price increases on medications that, for some people, could mean the difference between life and death.

The site will be continually updated with a gallery of curated videos and testimonials and ways for the public to take action or send a message to Congress. TruthinRx.org lays bare alarming figures, such as the 92-fold rise in price for an antibiotic that went from \$20 for 500 tablets to \$1,849 for the same quantity in just seven months.

The issue of prescription drug pricing is on the table for the AMA House of Delegates at the upcoming 2016 AMA Interim Meeting. A report of the AMA Council on Medical Service

proposes policy for value-based drug pricing programs and support for direct purchasing mechanisms to assure patient access to prescription drugs.

Patients share stories on drug pricing

More than 62,000 people have signed the petition asking representatives to increase pricing transparency.

Patients have already shared hundreds of personal stories and comments, which will be added to the site in the coming weeks. Here are a few of the responses so far:

- “Now that I’m a senior, the stories of seniors having to choose between food and medication hits closer to home. Stop the obscene profits made by the drug companies and bring prices to within reach of seniors already struggling.” — Nancy S., Greenfield, Ohio
- “Because both me and my wife are on a lot of different medicines and being on a fixed income, it really makes it hard to try and buy our meds. And to be able to eat and keep our house cool in the summer and warm in the winter.” — Jerrie B., Sarcoxie, Mo.
- “All my medication prices keep rising and now insurance companies are making it more difficult to get coverage as well due to the increased pricing. These drugs are needed to keep myself and others leading productive, healthy lives.” — Christina C., Newberg, Ore.
- “Why does a drug that costs the company less than three dollars to produce cost the American people over six hundred dollars?” — Dennis M., Skidmore, Mo.
- “Many of these drugs are for a ‘life and death’ situation and people should be able to afford them.” — Beverly C., Beverly Hills, Fla.
- “People spend so much money on medicine and don’t know why we are paying it besides the pharmacy saying that’s what it costs.” — Brandon T., Lenoir, N.C.
- “I am a cardiac patient required to take daily drugs. I want to know how the prices for drugs are set.” — Phyllis M., Lockhart, Texas
- “My patients cannot afford their medications and therefore are not taking what they need.” — Fran V., Hollywood, Fla.



The stories above reflect the concerns of millions of Americans as drug pricing becomes one of the top issues across the nation. Since there is little information on how prices are negotiated or the role of industry players, the AMA is asking the public to join the initiative to uncover the truth about prescription drug prices.

Visit [TruthinRx.org](https://patients.ama-assn.org/public-health/behavioral-health/patients-give-voice-call-drug-pricing-transparency) to tell your story and get involved.