

## Out-of Pocket Costs More Important Than Drug Rise

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While the article "[Drug Prices Climb By 5.8%](#)" (Page One, Jan. 3) points to the complexities behind pharmaceutical drug pricing, the real issue is rising patient out-of-pocket costs owing to insufficient benefit design.

When you compare individual cost sharing for hospital care versus outpatient medications, you can see the problem. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services data for 2018 show that U.S. spending on hospital care was more than \$1 trillion compared with \$335 billion for outpatient prescription drugs. Even though hospital costs were much higher, an analysis done by Drug Channels Institute, which provides research on the drug supply chain, showed that consumers were on the hook for \$12 billion more in out-of-pocket costs for their prescriptions than for their hospital care.

The economic impact and positive health benefits of medication adherence is well documented. It can save lives and hundreds of billions of dollars annually. Adherence should be the goal for which public and private payers are striving. It's time to have a constructive dialogue around benefit design and rising out-of-pocket costs for patients and the sustainability and efficiency of the health-care system.

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