

PANDEMIC WORSENS, BUT IT'S PRICE HIKES AS USUAL FOR PHARMA

Vital Drugs Important To COVID-Related Outcomes See Big Bumps

In June, nearly 9 in 10 U.S. adults [said](#) they were concerned pharma would use the pandemic to raise drug prices: **They were right.** Pharma has increased the price of over 1,000 drugs this year, with more than 200 increases since July.

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In June, we [exposed](#) pharmaceutical corporations that continued to hike their prices in the midst of a pandemic — even on vital drugs related to the crisis. Since July 1, the industry has continued to raise prices on critical drugs, including drugs that treat chronic conditions that place people at risk for severe COVID-19 illness and drugs that have shown promise in COVID-19 clinical trials.

Here's a closer look at 10 price hikes taken by pharmaceutical corporations since July 1 — and how these pandemic hikes hurt patients:

I. JAKAFI: ANTICIPATION OF PANDEMIC PROFIT

Ruxolitinib | *Incyte Corporation*

This year, Incyte Corporation has hiked the price of a month's supply of Jakafi by \$683 — amounting to more than an \$8,000 increase for a year's supply.¹ This month's hike, which brought the monthly price to \$14,187, is Jakafi's second pandemic hike; Incyte also raised the price when COVID-19 infections peaked for the first time in mid-July. **The price increase comes right as Incyte (and Novartis, which markets ruxolitinib outside the United States) anticipates phase 3 clinical trial results testing the drug's efficacy against COVID-19. The trial is one of 20 trials initiated to test ruxolitinib for COVID-19.** Jakafi is currently [approved](#) to treat myelofibrosis, polycythemia vera, and graft-versus-host disease, but success against coronavirus would lead to skyrocketing demand and pandemic profits.



THE IMPACT OF PRICE HIKES ON PATIENTS

Jakafi

"I was diagnosed with polycythemia vera (PV), a rare blood cancer, in 1997. Since 2014, Jakafi has been keeping me alive. But my Jakafi prescription now costs me \$2,883 for the first month and then \$651 a month for the rest of the year, which adds up to a total of \$10,044 annually. This astronomical cost has created financial challenges for me and my wife."

- **Gary Gross** *Cincinnati, OH*

1. All prices and price changes are from AnalySource® as reprinted with permission by First DataBank Inc. All rights reserved. © (2020). Please refer to <http://www.fdbhealth.com/policies/drug-pricing-policy/> for more information.

2. ZOLADEX: 40-YEAR-OLD DRUG EXTRACTS CASH FROM CANCER PATIENTS

Goserelin acetate | *TerSera Therapeutics and AstraZeneca*



Goserelin, a synthetic hormone used to treat prostate cancer and breast cancer, was [FDA-approved](#) for clinical use in 1989. Even though all initial patents have expired, TerSera and AstraZeneca have exploited the patent system to protect the brand-name product, Zoladex, from competition [until 2022](#). Experts [estimate](#) that patent extensions on non-innovative features of the drug have led to 200 months of added protection from competitors. **Thanks to patent shenanigans, after enjoying a 30-year monopoly, TerSera hiked the price of Zoladex by 9.9 percent last month, bringing the monthly supply to almost \$3,000.**

3 & 4. TAVALISSE AND SYLVANT: ORPHAN DRUGS SEEKING WORLDWIDE MARKET

Fostamatinib | *Rigel Pharmaceuticals*

Siltuximab | *EUSA Pharma/Janssen*



Tavalisse is an FDA-approved [orphan drug](#) for the [50,000](#) Americans living with chronic immune thrombocytopenia (ITP). It costs \$11,810 for a one-month supply. The drug company might have been able to justify the high price with the relatively small market size for ITP, but now Rigel is seeking a new market with millions of patients: COVID-19. Despite having already raised the price in February — right after the start of the pandemic — Rigel chose to raise the price again in July. **The second hike occurred just days before Rigel [announced](#) a trial testing the drug against COVID-19. The combined 2020 hikes amount to a \$1,048 (or 9 percent) increase for a month's supply.** In addition, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is [running](#) a randomized control trial in hospitalized COVID-19 patients.

Tavalisse is not the only drug seeking to widen its market for an orphan drug. **Sylvant (siltuximab), a drug made by EUSA Pharma/Janssen for treating Castleman's disease, has seen a price increase of 9.5 percent while the company tests it against COVID-19 in [several](#) clinical trials worldwide.**

5. ENTYVIO: EVER-INCREASING PRICE OF TREATING IBD

Vedolizumab | *Takeda Pharmaceuticals*

Patients with inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD) are often treated with immunosuppressant drugs, placing them at even higher risk of infection during a global pandemic. In addition to COVID-19 risk, Entyvio patients are now also facing additional financial barriers due to price hikes by Takeda. The drug corporation has increased the price of Entyvio by 45 percent in just six years on the market, including two hikes in 2020. **Today, one vial of the medication costs almost \$7,000.**



THE IMPACT OF PRICE HIKES ON PATIENTS

Entyvio

“In 2014, I was diagnosed with ulcerative colitis. Two years in, I began receiving Entyvio infusions every four weeks. Initially, the infusions did not pose a financial burden. But after an insurance change, I realized just how expensive Entyvio is. Every four weeks, I had to pay \$1,200 per infusion. Unfortunately, with the added financial burden from my infusions, I could no longer afford to continue my college education. My life path has been completely altered by expensive prescription drugs and drug company greed.”

- **Kolton Chapman** *Pickerington, OH*



THE IMPACT OF PRICE HIKES ON PATIENTS

Entyvio

“I was diagnosed with ulcerative colitis in 2017 after a prolonged illness and hospitalization. Initially, many treatments weren’t effective at managing my condition. But in 2019, I began Entyvio. I was thankful the drug kept me healthy – but the cost weighed on me. Even with insurance, it cost \$500 each month. I’ve been fortunate to have support to cover the costs, but I constantly worry about what would happen if I couldn’t afford it.”

- **Candice Brown** *Alexandria, VA*

6. FARXIGA: DIABETES DRUG DEFENDED BY PATENTS

Dapagliflozin propanediol | AstraZeneca



Farxiga is used to [treat](#) adults with heart failure and type 2 diabetes — conditions that put patients at heightened risk of adverse outcomes from COVID-19. In addition to treating this community, AstraZeneca’s drug is being [investigated](#) as a possible treatment for the novel coronavirus in phase 3 clinical trials. **The drug’s price has been hiked two times this year, increasing to more than \$500 for a month’s supply.** The drug is also guarded by a thicket of 36 patents, which [will protect](#) the drug from competition until 2030.

7. FANAPT: COPING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS MADE MORE DIFFICULT

Iloperidone | Vanda Pharmaceuticals

Fanapt is a critical treatment for people battling schizophrenia, but the tablet comes at a steep price. Before the pandemic, just one month’s supply was priced at more than \$1,100. **As millions of Americans face loss of insurance and wages, Vanda increased the price by more than 17 percent in 2020.** For patients with schizophrenia, that means a monthly supply of Fanapt is now \$1,385. Patients do not have any other options because Fanapt has sought patent protection that gives Vanda a monopoly until [2031](#).

As millions of Americans face loss of insurance and wages, Vanda increased the price of mental health drug Fanapt by more than 17 percent in 2020.

8 & 9. IXEMPRA & NERLYNX: ADDING BARRIERS FOR BREAST CANCER PATIENTS

Ixempra (ixabepilone) | R-Pharm

Nerlynx (neratinib maleate) | Puma Biotechnology

[Nearly half](#) of all breast cancer patients say they face financial difficulty in treating their condition, but drug companies keep raising prices even as COVID-19 puts breast cancer patients at increased health risk. **R-Pharm raised the price of Ixempra twice this year – resulting in a total increase of more than 10 percent.** One vial of the IV chemotherapy now costs \$4,875, which is \$500 more than in the beginning of the year. **Puma Biotechnology raised the price of its breast cancer drug, Nerlynx, in March and August of this year – both 9.9 percent hikes.** As a result, a month’s supply of Nerlynx is priced at \$16,695.

	Drug Name	2020 Price Increase	Current Price (Month Supply)
Breast Cancer Drugs	Ixempra	+ 10%	\$4,875
	Nerlynx	+19.8%	\$16,695

10. ADZENYS: MANIPULATING PRICES FOR ADHD TREATMENT

Amphetamine | Neos Therapeutics

Although amphetamine was [first approved](#) for clinical use by the FDA in 1960, many commercialized versions of the drug still hold monopolies. Adzenys XR-ODT, a product sold by Neos Therapeutics, is a new form (disintegrating tablet) of the 60-year-old drug that will enjoy patent protections [until 2032](#). This protection enables the company to execute unilateral price hike prices that hurt patients with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). **In the midst of the pandemic in July, the company increased the price by 10 percent – resulting in a price of \$396 for a month’s supply.**

60 years after amphetamine’s first approval, Neo Therapeutics increased the price of its amphetamine, Adzenys, by 10 percent in the midst of the pandemic.

WE NEED PRESIDENT-ELECT BIDEN AND CONGRESS **TO HEED VOTERS AND LOWER DRUG PRICES**

In the 2020 elections, voters across the country cast ballots for candidates who promised drug pricing reform. But as the coronavirus crisis continues to devastate the health and financial well-being of Americans across the nation, pharmaceutical companies continue to exploit loopholes in our drug pricing system in order to maximize profits — at the expense of patients and taxpayers. **As President-elect Biden and members of Congress take office in January, their mandate is clear: Stand up to Big Pharma and lower drug prices.**