

Internists testify about rising prescription drug prices and their impact on patients

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The American College of Physicians (ACP) today provided [physician perspective](#) on the escalating cost of prescription drugs, the impact of the costs on internal medicine physicians and their patients, and support for the intent of the bipartisan Creating and Restoring Equal Access to Equivalent Samples (CREATES) Act of 2016 to reduce anti-competitive practices.

Testifying before the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Antitrust, Competition Policy and Consumer Rights, Nitin S. Damle, MD, MS, FACP, president of ACP, an assistant professor of medicine at Brown University, and a practicing internal medicine physician, spoke on behalf of ACP's 143,000 members.

"ACP recognizes that ensuring and improving patient access to prescription drugs is a growing need," Dr. Damle said. "Over the past several years, we have seen a dramatic rise in the cost of prescription drugs in this country. These increases apply not only to specialty drugs that treat life-threatening illness like cancer, but also common drugs like antibiotics that treat bacterial infections. That, coupled with several recent high-profile price gauging cases, has vaulted the issue of rising prescription drug costs into the forefront of our everyday conversations, including among those in Congress."

ACP strongly supports using multiple approaches—such as cost and price transparency, greater flexibility for public programs to leverage volume purchasing, and encouraging competition, among others—to

stem the increasing cost of [prescription drugs](#), Dr. Damle noted. In fact, ACP recently developed a series of specific positions and recommendations that were published just three months ago in its position paper on escalating drug prices, "[Stemming the Escalating Cost of Prescription Drugs](#)." ACP supports policies and proposals that give patients the best available information and access to prescription medications at the lowest cost possible, while acknowledging the need for a strong pharmaceutical market that fosters investment in and development of new treatments.

"ACP believes it is important that policies addressing the increase in prescription drug prices cover not only new entrants to the market, but also drugs that have been on the market and may be generic or single-source drugs," Dr. Damle emphasized.

Dr. Damle told the subcommittee about experiences from his own practice, teaching and from colleagues from around the country he's talked to as ACP president. "I see firsthand the choices that patients must make about their health."

- A 67-year-old patient with diabetes, hypertension and heart disease can no longer afford his medications, as he has fallen into the "doughnut hole" of drug coverage. He must take brand name drugs due to lack of cheaper generic alternatives to control his diabetes and prevent another heart attack.
- A 40-year-old patient with asthma cannot afford his preventive and rescue inhalers because of the high cost and his high deductible plan. There are again no generic alternatives. His non-compliance with medication will lead to an asthma exacerbation that may lead to an emergency room visit and even admission to the hospital.
- A patient with rheumatoid arthritis cannot afford the immune modulating medications that are the standard of care due to the

cost of the brand name medication with no generic alternatives. The inability to treat early [rheumatoid arthritis](#) with these medications will lead to more serious joint problems including joint replacement surgery and other medical complications of the disease.

"These examples from just one day in my office are repeated day in and day out," Dr. Damle said. "Advances in medicine have been lifesaving but they need to be affordable to society. Non-compliance with medication regimens can lead to more serious health complications, more patients suffering from disease and more costs to society. The pharmaceutical industry needs a reasonable return on investment but there needs to be a balance between profits and the service they provide in treating and maintaining the health of our patients."

Dr. Damle concluded his remarks by expressing appreciation to the Subcommittee for asking for input from the physician community during introduction of the CREATES Act. "Our hope is that the information shared today will give that provider perspective. We stand ready to continue to serve as a resource and welcome the opportunity to continue to work with you as you continue to advance this bill through the 114th Congress.

Provided by American College of Physicians

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