

Leading U.S. doctors' group takes aim at rising drug prices

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(HealthDay)—The American Medical Association is calling for more transparency in drug pricing amid skyrocketing costs that are putting some lifesaving medications out of reach for patients and communities.

During its annual meeting, the doctors' group adopted new policies on drug pricing to protect patients.

"Taken together, these policies would bring much needed transparency to drug pricing and provide a clear benefit to consumers struggling with exorbitant [costs](#)," AMA President-Elect Dr. Barbara McAneny said in an association news release.

One policy calls on pharmaceutical companies to list the suggested retail prices of drugs in direct-to-consumer ads. The AMA will urge federal regulators to include that requirement.

The association pointed out that one study found a 34 percent increase in prices for prescription drugs

advertised directly to consumers. For other medications, the increase was 5 percent.

Direct-to-consumer ads were illegal in the United States until 1997. Only one other country—New Zealand—currently allows these ads.

Another policy is meant to tackle the sudden increase in the cost of [naloxone](#). This is a lifesaving drug used to reverse the effects of opioid overdose. Community groups, schools, first responders and local governments rely on naloxone to save lives, but are finding it increasingly expensive.

The AMA plans to raise awareness about the "troubling conduct" of the three makers of naloxone. The companies sought the help of physicians, community groups and elected officials to raise awareness and insurance coverage of naloxone and then suddenly and significantly boosted the cost of the drug after public policy changes increased access to naloxone, according to the association.

"There seems to be no logic—or warning—to these price spikes. In the case of naloxone, communities are struggling to afford a lifesaving treatment. Sunlight is needed to help respond to price shifts, because if the pricing trends continue, patients and communities will not be able to afford lifesaving drugs," McAneny said.

The AMA also said it will support legislative, regulatory and advocacy efforts to improve access to affordable naloxone.

A third new policy calls on [drug](#) companies to give public notice before increasing the price of certain drugs by more than 10 percent during a 12-month period. This would provide information about the most serious cases of price gouging, particularly for older drugs, according to the AMA.

More information: SOURCE: American Medical

Association, news release, June 15, 2017

For more on drug pricing, visit the [U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services](#).

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