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Study: Significant Drug Price Differences in Women's Health Medications When Prescribed at Hospitals

LANSING, Mich. – Women in Michigan can experience a variance of up to \$30,000 for the same medication, depending on which hospital the medication is prescribed, according to two research reports released by the Michigan Health Purchasers Coalition (MIHPC). The reports highlight pricing variances and discrepancies when it comes to women's health medications, specifically [denosumab](#) and [ocrelizumab](#). MIHPC has used the average sales price (ASP), the volume-weighted average of manufacturer sales prices for a drug across all purchasers, and the net of all price concessions (rebates, discounts, etc.) as the baseline for these findings. ASP is used as a guideline for how much health systems should pay for a specific medication.

"These reports underscore the wide gap in hospital pricing across the state," said Bret Jackson, President of MIHPC. "Referencing the ASP as a benchmark reveals the extent to which hospitals are inflating prices for everyday drugs, further demonstrating the need for urgent action on improved transparency and accountability throughout hospitals across Michigan."

MIHPC's aim is to highlight these pricing disparities and increase awareness about the importance of drug pricing transparency in healthcare. The following information has been pulled from their two most recent studies:

1. Denosumab Injection
 - a. This injection is commonly used to treat multiple bone-related conditions, including osteoporosis treatment. Women account for about 80% of the estimated 20 million Americans with osteoporosis.¹

- b. In the Ann Arbor-Jackson area, prices range from \$1,557 to \$3,410 for a single dose.
 - c. Across 22 hospitals in Metro-Detroit, there is a \$2,576 price difference for a single dose.
 - d. Within the Henry Ford Health System, patients could save \$450 and employers could save \$338,100 for 150 employees by selecting lower cost hospitals for this injection.
2. Ocrelizumab Injection
- a. This injection is commonly used to treat various immune-related disorders, including multiple sclerosis. Approximately 76% of patients with a multiple sclerosis diagnosis in the US are female.²
 - b. In the Grand Rapids-Wyoming area, prices range from \$10,325 to \$26,175, a \$15,850 price difference for the same injection.
 - c. Across 23 hospitals in Metro-Detroit, there is a \$31,836 price difference for a single dose.
 - d. In Metro-Detroit, patients could save \$4,128 and employers could save \$5,485,335 for 150 employees by selecting lower cost hospitals for this injection.

“Women make up the majority of patients living with conditions like osteoporosis and multiple sclerosis, causing them to be subject to these exorbitant prices for medications. A single injection varying in cost by over \$30,000 per dose clearly shows hospital pricing has spiraled beyond reason. Women shouldn’t have to be burdened with debt or fear not being able to receive medical care due to egregious hospital pricing. We need to protect women's health which means calling on hospitals to be transparent and be held accountable. The time for reform is now,” said Jackson.

Michigan Health Purchasers Coalition (MIHPC) is a 501(c)(4) statewide coalition dedicated to mobilizing employers, families, and healthcare stakeholders to address critical issues in Michigan's health care system. MIHPC’s initiatives include increasing hospital price transparency, prohibiting anti-competitive contracts and billing, increasing oversight on consolidations and mergers, and incorporating fair pricing among all payers of healthcare. For more information, please visit mihpc.org.

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¹<https://www.bonehealthandosteoporosis.org/preventing-fractures/general-facts/what-women-need-to-know/>

²Hittle M, Culpepper WJ, Langer-Gould A, et al. Population-Based Estimates for the Prevalence of Multiple Sclerosis in the United States by Race, Ethnicity, Age, Sex, and Geographic Region. JAMA Neurol. 2023;80(7):693–701. doi:10.1001/jamaneurol.2023.1135