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Studies in other fields have demonstrated similar variations in prices for generic drugs.³ These findings have considerable implications for patients, especially those in low-income areas and those who may not be able to travel to multiple pharmacies. Indeed, it is not clear how well equipped patients are to "price shop" and if physicians and electronic medical records create further barriers to finding the most affordable retailers.⁴ The data presented in this paper will help raise awareness of this issue within urology and motivate us to guide patients to lower cost pharmacies. While policy solutions for high drug prices are often debated, they are uncertain. For now, a physician recommendation to find an independent pharmacy and to call to inquire about price may be the simplest way to reduce financial burden for patients and improve medication adherence.

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Financial Disclosure: No conflicts of interest to report.

EDITORIAL COMMENT



The rising cost of prescription drugs is of increasing interest to policymakers, patients, and the general public. As blockbuster new drugs are known to be expensive, the timely availability of generic drugs and encouraging their use are important strategies to keep drug costs in check.^{1,2} High prices for generic medications, therefore, are particularly vexing. The authors of this study examined the variation in price for generic medications commonly used in the management of benign prostatic hyperplasia. By calling all pharmacies in a restricted geographic area around Pittsburgh, the authors determined the out of pocket prices that would be quoted to a patient without prescription drug insurance. They found that the price of tamsulosin, finasteride, and extended release oxybutynin varied by up to 500% between pharmacies. Chain pharmacies (eg, CVS, Walgreens) were significantly more expensive than independent pharmacies for each of these drugs.

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UROLOGY 124: 228, 2019. © 2018 Elsevier Inc.