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The U.S. Insulin Crisis

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Progress Report

Since its century-old discovery, the cost of insulin has substantially increased. Three pharmaceutical companies – Eli Lilly, Novo Nordisk, and Sanofi-Aventis – have sustained a “monopolistic hold” on the insulin market. One 10-ml vial of Humalog, for example, a popular rapid-acting insulin lispro injection manufactured by Eli Lilly, underwent a 685% price increase from \$35 in 2001 to \$275 today. The lack of laws capping price increases coupled with limited competition of biosimilar drugs from entering the market have placed an economic burden on Americans who need insulin to treat their diabetes. Americans who are unable to afford the high costs of insulin have turned to insulin rationing, whether that be skipping drug doses, delaying filling prescriptions, or taking less of the drug than prescribed. Insulin rationing can result in worsened glycemic control and lead to a condition known as diabetic ketoacidosis. The consequences of diabetic ketoacidosis are severe and often fatal. The federal government has recently engaged in insulin price reform. The Affordable Drug Manufacturing Act and the Emergency Access to Insulin Act were introduced to eliminate barriers that exist for competition to enter the market and expand access to insulin supplies to those in significant need; however, the bills have yet to be enacted. States have also attempted to address the problem of insulin affordability. Colorado and Illinois are currently the only states to have passed law legislations that cap out-of-pocket costs of insulin for all diabetics with six other states not far behind. For many, insulin is key to their survival and its affordability should be a concern for all stakeholders involved.



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