

“Healing an ailing pharmaceutical system: prescription for reform for U.S. and Canada” Op-ed or Letter to the Editor sample points:

- **Americans spend more on prescriptions than any other developed country**, not because we consume more medicine, but because we pay more for the same treatments. Despite industry claims, research and development costs cannot justify these prices. Total R&D [expenditures](#) of 10 firms that recently introduced new cancer drugs amounted to \$9 billion, while those drugs generated \$67 billion in revenues.
- **The industry says that only the profit motive will spur innovation in medicine.** But history tells us that scientific curiosity and the joys of discovery are what drive medical breakthroughs. Two key developers of insulin — Frederick Banting and John Macleod — wouldn't put their names on the first insulin patent. The researchers who did take the patent sold it back to their university for \$1 to assure that “no one could secure a profitable monopoly.” Jonas Salk, inventor of the polio vaccine, also rejected patenting for his breakthrough, declaring, “Could you patent the sun?”
- **American taxpayers already subsidize the basic research behind most new medicines** by providing grants to researchers through the National Institutes of Health. In 1980, Congress passed the [Bayh-Dole Act](#) permitting researchers to patent their government-supported work products and sell them to private drug firms, who then charge whatever prices the market will bear. That's a lousy return on investment for American taxpayers who increasingly cannot afford to fill their own prescriptions. Let's change the law so that tax-funded breakthroughs actually benefit the American people, not just corporate bottom lines.
- **The profit-driven pharmaceutical industry ignores many conditions that it deems unprofitable.** Earlier this year, drug giant Pfizer [announced](#) that it had given up trying to find treatments for Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, two common and debilitating diseases. This is exactly the type of research that we should support with public money. But we must also ensure that discoveries we support are kept in a patent-free public domain, so that new treatments can be sold cheaply as generics as soon as they are brought to market, providing maximum benefit to all Americans.
- **The FDA's job is to guarantee that only the safest and most effective drugs come to market.** However, since the 1990s, the FDA has been funded primarily by drug company fees, creating huge conflicts of interest. It's no surprise that more than two-thirds of new drugs receive “expedited reviews,” which require shorter review times and weaker standards of evidence for approval. Let's make sure the FDA works for the public good by funding it with tax dollars instead of corporate fees.

President Trump's proposal to bring down drug prices was so weak that pharmaceutical stocks shot up after his speech! **In contrast, a group of physician leaders from both the U.S. and Canada released a plan targeting the root of high drug prices**, including major reforms to the way that we develop and patent pharmaceuticals, fund research, approve new drugs, and negotiate prices.

“[Healing an ailing pharmaceutical system: prescription for reform for U.S. and Canada](#),” was published on May 17 in *The BMJ*, a prominent peer-reviewed medical journal, and provides a detailed blueprint for curbing the power of the pharmaceutical industry. The proposal also includes a plan for providing universal drug coverage to all Americans through a national formulary of the safest, most effective and most affordable drugs.