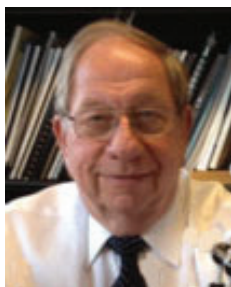


The Healthcare Fairness for All Act is a fairer system that would give every family the same government financial support.



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What Have the Drug Companies Done for Us Lately?

Critics of “Big Pharma” remind us of a hilarious scene from the Monty Python movie *The Life of Brian*. In it, a subversive group is plotting against the Romans. At the end of a speech outlining what the Romans have appropriated and the scheme to overthrow the empire, one of the leaders forcefully asks, “What have they ever given us in return?”

After a moment’s silence, someone responds, “the aqueduct?” The speaker grudgingly admits that the aqueducts are nice. Then, one by one, people in the group list the valuable things the Romans have bestowed, much to the dismay of the speaker.

The agitated speaker then ends with, “All right, but apart from the sanitation, the medicine, education, wine, public order, irrigation, roads, a freshwater system, and public health, what have the Romans ever done for us?”

Fast forward to 2024 and these critics, in so many words, ask, “What have pharmaceutical companies ever given us other than high prices?” Having spent many decades in the industry, we offer a partial list.

Preventing heart attacks and strokes. Drugs for hypertension and heart disease, including ACE inhibitors, angiotensin II receptor blockers, beta blockers, calcium channel blockers, diuretics, and vasodilators are among the most effective heart attack, pulmonary embolism, deep-vein thrombosis, and stroke preventatives. The new GLP-1 agonists, such as Ozempic, Victoza, Wegovy, and Mounjaro, not only help with weight loss, they also help with diabetes and preventing heart attacks and strokes.

Anticoagulants (blood thinners) prevent blood clots from moving to the lungs, hearts, and brains of people with clots such as former Senator Hillary Clinton. Cholesterol-lowering statins such as Crestor and Lipitor spare us from many thousands of heart attacks and strokes each year.

AIDS, Hepatitis C, and more. HIV/AIDS treatments, including Genvoya and Biktarvy, have turned a death sentence into a chronic, manageable condition for people like Magic Johnson. Medicines such as Harvoni permanently cure about 95 percent of patients with hepatitis C. Think about that. One course of treatment cures a nasty chronic disease.

Can you imagine enduring surgery while being alert because anesthesia

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hadn't been invented? Bleeding to death from ulcers is largely a thing of the past, thanks to antibiotics, H2 antagonists, and proton pump inhibitors.

Making everyday life better. Who doubts the value of analgesics, from aspirin to Aleve to Tylenol to morphine, which help us manage pain daily? Antidepressants help millions live better lives. Anticonvulsants and antipsychotics are important categories of medicines. Birth control pills changed our culture by giving women control over pregnancies. Allergy treatments can prevent anaphylactic shock.

Diabetes. Consider the treatment of diabetes. Within the last fifty years we have seen recombinant human insulin, faster-acting meal-time insulins, longer-acting basal insulins, metformin, GLP-1 agonists, SGLT-2 inhibitors, insulin pumps, continuous glucose monitors, and the artificial pancreas. These developments are the difference between life and death for countless diabetics.

Cancer therapies. The PD-1 inhibitor Keytruda saved former president Jimmy Carter from metastatic melanoma. Drugs like Keytruda are often given with the granddaddy of cancer treatments: chemotherapy. You undoubtedly know someone who has benefited from chemotherapy. The next phase of cancer medicine is cell therapy, in which some of the patient's cells are removed, altered—sort of reprogrammed—and reintroduced, thereby allowing them to target and kill cancerous

cells. Antiemetics are used before and after chemotherapy to prevent nausea and vomiting.

Gene therapies. Gene therapies are just now hitting their stride, treating rare but devastating childhood diseases. One gene therapy promises to cure children of a genetic defect that prevents them from fighting infections. The more severely afflicted kids normally die before age two.

Migraines and sexual disorders. Migraine drugs prevent and treat these debilitating headaches. The migraine drug Nurtec has helped Lady Gaga. Hay fever treatments and bronchodilators for asthmatics, such as Primatene Mist, Pulmicort Flexhaler, and Ventolin allow many sufferers to function normally. The PDE5 inhibitors, such as Viagra and Cialis, allow older people to remain sexually active.

Vaccines. Millions benefit annually from flu vaccines, and those who do become infected can take Tamiflu. Shingles vaccines prevent the chicken pox virus from resurfacing later in life, causing great pain. Many Americans remember the importance of the Jonas Salk polio vaccine. Vaccines for childhood diseases probably offer the best bang for the buck. Maurice Hilleman developed 40 vaccines over his career at Merck & Co. and has been credited with saving over 130 million lives.

The COVID vaccines and treatments helped us during a difficult pandemic.

Those are just a few of the things that pharmaceutical companies ever done for us.



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