

The Three Minute Read™

Insights from the Healing American Healthcare Coalition™

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From the Editor: This issue's article summaries begin with Shark Tank's Mark Cuban's disruption of the pharmaceutical industry as CVS joins Cigna in moving to a cost-plus pricing model, continues with questions about side effects of weight-loss drugs, boosting medical supplies, artificial hips snapping, and good news on US life expectancy. Click on the headline to read the full article. If you enjoy TMR, please subscribe [here](#) for \$25.00 /year.



[Mark Cuban Cost Plus Drugs, Expion Health team to address specialty drug costs](#), by Paige

Minemyer, Fierce Healthcare, 11/27/23

TMR Topline – Mark Cuban Cost Plus Drug Company is joining forces with Expion Health to address the rising cost of specialty drugs, integrating Cost Plus Drugs' pricing model into Expion's dynamic pricing technology to harness the power of both for specialty medications. Such drugs account for more than half of drug spending despite accounting for a small portion of prescriptions. Chris Westbrook, chief client officer at Expion Health, said *"Together, we're reshaping the narrative around drug costs, setting a new industry standard."*



[CVS to overhaul drug-pricing model to boost transparency amid scrutiny of high cost for meds](#), by Shannon

Thaler, New York Post, 12/5/23

TMR Topline – CVS Health will overhaul its drug-pricing model to boost transparency amid scrutiny of the soaring

cost for medications. CostVantage's structure will be similar to the "cost plus" payment model earlier implemented by [Mark Cuban's Cost Plus Drugs](#), shifting to fixed rates for reimbursements from pharmacy benefit managers and insurers. It's not clear if CVS's shift towards cost plus will make its drugs cheaper although its costs will much more closely reflect what it pays to acquire the drugs.



[As Ozempic cases mount, consumer lawyers push to consolidate lawsuits](#), by Diana Novak-Jones.

Reuters, 12/5/23

TMR Topline – About 20 lawsuits over the GLP-1 receptor agonists have been filed since August against Novo Nordisk and Eli Lilly, makers of Ozempic and Wegovy alleging that they weren't properly warned about harsh side effects like stomach paralysis and intestinal paralysis or obstruction. The Morgan & Morgan law firm that filed the consolidation motion said that it is investigating more than 10,000 claims related to the drugs.



[Biden invokes Cold War-era measure to boost medical supplies](#), by Steve Holland and Jason Lange, Reuters, 11/27/23

TMR Topline – President Biden has invoked the Defense Production Act to boost investment in US manufacturing of medicines and medical supplies as part of a series of 30 measures to help industrial supply chains and counter historically high inflation. It authorizes HHS to enable investments in "essential medicines," including "medical countermeasures," which include supplies that diagnose, prevent, or treat diseases related to chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear attacks. National Economic Council head Lael Brainard told reporters that supply chain stress had come down from record highs hit during the Covid-19 pandemic, but more work needed to be done.

TMR's Take: Whether it's drug development, distribution or dispensing, "**disruption**" is the word that best describes 2023 for the pharmaceutical industry.



[Patients Expected Profemur Artificial Hips to Last. Then They Snapped in Half.](#)

by Brett Kelman and Anna Werner, KFF Health News, 12/5/23

TMR Topline – Marketed as the product for patients who wanted to return to an "active lifestyle" by Wright Medical Technology in 2000, the innovative Profemur artificial hip turned out to be anything but. Its "dual modular neck" made it easier to customize the hip implants for patients, but also proved to be a weak point. More than 750 Profemur hips have fractured at the neck, leaving patients unable to walk and in need of emergency surgery that can be traumatic because the broken implant is embedded in their bone and difficult to remove. Many fractures could have been avoided if the manufacturer or the FDA responded to early signs of failure with more urgency. The Profemur was cleared for sale by the FDA in 2000 through the [510\(k\) program](#), which permits new medical devices to be sold without extensive testing if they are deemed to have "substantial equivalence" to other devices already on the market. The company had told the FDA that it was substantially equivalent to five existing artificial hip systems.



[Why Doctors and Pharmacists are in Revolt.](#)

by Noam Scheiber, New York Times, 12/3/23

TMR Topline – The Service Employees International Union Doctors Council says doctors from dozens of facilities around the country have inquired about organizing over the past few years. Nurses held [eight major work stoppages](#) in 2022, the most in a decade and are on pace to match or exceed that number this year. This fall, dozens of nonunion pharmacists at CVS and Walgreens called in sick or walked off the job to protest understaffing. These recent labor actions are understandable. Doctors, nurses, and pharmacists say they are being asked to do more with less staff, leading to exhaustion and anxiety about putting patients at risk. Many said they were stretched to the limit after the pandemic began, and that their work demands have never fully subsided. Dr. Alia Sharif of an Allina hospital said, "We're seen as cogs in the wheel. You can be a physician, or a factory worker and you're treated exactly the same way by these large corporations."



RSNA 2023

[Radiology industry embraces AI at annual meeting.](#)

by Brock E. W. Turner, Modern Healthcare, 11/28/23

TMR Topline – Radiological Society of North America President Dr. Matthew Mauro said rapidly advancing generative AI technology will be able to aid radiologists in various tasks ranging from scheduling appointments to triaging imaging studies. Many experts believe AI can be a potential remedy to mounting challenges felt by radiologists such as staff shortages and the increasing number of images clinicians need to process. AI is [used more often in radiology](#) than any other specialty, which has led to mixed feelings in the profession about the technology's effect on its future. A recent study by researchers at USC's Keck School of Medicine found that 22% of medical students said they were less likely to choose radiology as a career due to concerns about advances in AI.

TMR's Take: AI to the rescue? Too soon to tell, although the US healthcare delivery system certainly is overripe for disruption.



[US life expectancy rebounded in 2022 but not back to pre-pandemic levels.](#)

by Deidre McPhillips, CNN, 11/29/23

TMR Topline – The CDC's 2022 provisional [data](#) show that life expectancy [has](#) partly rebounded from the 2.4 years drop during the first two years of the Covid-19 pandemic, rising by 1.1 years to 78.5 years. Decreasing mortality from Covid-19 was the key factor driving life expectancy up, with about 245,000 deaths in 2022 compared with about 385,000 in 2020 and more than 462,000 in 2021. Lower mortality from heart disease, unintentional injuries, cancer and homicide also helped bolster life expectancy in 2022. Conversely, overall mortality from influenza and pneumonia, perinatal conditions, kidney disease and nutritional deficiencies increased in 2022. The US continues to lag other high-income countries in average life expectancy at birth.

TMR's Take: While the 2022 gain in life expectancy is positive news, the US lags its peer countries by four to eight years according to the [OECD](#). On a more positive note, the CDC also [reported](#) that hospital-associated infections declined across all categories in 2022, with the most significant drops in CAUTIs, MRSA and ventilator-associated events.