

**Attorney General Mike Cox**  
**May 2007**  
**Prescription Drug Survey Summary**

**Prescription drug prices may vary from day to day, so the prices you find at your pharmacy may not be the prices that appear in this survey.**

The Attorney General's consumer alert entitled, "Are You Paying Too Much For Your Prescription Drugs? Shop Around and Find Out!" is available at [www.michigan.gov/ag](http://www.michigan.gov/ag).

A power point summarizing the May survey results and advocating for an increase in the number of drugs available on the Department of Community Health's Web site is available at: [www.michigan.gov/ag](http://www.michigan.gov/ag).

**I. Attorney General Surveyed 200 Pharmacies in Ten Communities**

Attorney General staff surveyed 200 pharmacies around the state on May 8, 2007. The communities surveyed on this date are as follows:

Community

1. Detroit area;
2. Flint area;
3. Grand Rapids;
4. Kalamazoo area;
5. Lansing area;
6. Marquette/Upper Peninsula;
7. Saginaw/Bay City area;
8. Traverse City area
9. Troy; and
10. Warren.

The survey tracks the price charged a cash paying customer without insurance for 11 common brand-name prescription drugs.

**II. Drug Selection and Call Scripts**

**A. Drug Selection**

The drugs selected for the survey are not currently on the Michigan Department of Community Health (DCH) Michigan Drug Prices Web site ([www.michigandrugprices.com](http://www.michigandrugprices.com)). The MDCH Web site lists 30 drugs, which are identified as prices for 30 of the most commonly used drugs in Michigan, as reported by the MDCH's Medical Services Administration.

The 11 drugs surveyed are:

<b>Drug</b>	<b>Dosage</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Common Use</b>
Advair Diskus	250/50	60 dose disc (inhaler)	Asthma
Ambien	10 mg	30 tablets	Insomnia
Avandia	4 mg	60 tablets	Diabetes
Effexor XR	75 mg	30 capsules	Depression
Fosamax	10 mg	30 tablets	Osteoporosis
Norvasc	5 mg	30 tablets	Heart Disease
Plavix	75 mg	30 tablets	Blood Thinner
Premarin	0.625 mg	30 tablets	Hormonal Therapy
Prevacid	15 mg	30 tablets	Acid Reflux
Protonix	40 mg	30 tablets	Acid Reflux/Heartburn
Singulair	10 mg	30 tablets	Asthma

## **B. Call Scripts**

Surveyors used call scripts containing precise dosing information, a prescribed monthly quantity, and patient profile facts. Surveyors were instructed to strictly adhere to the scripts and to insist on pricing information for the prescriptions as written.

## **III. Survey Results**

The results from this survey clearly illustrate that drug prices vary significantly both within a community and from community to community. The survey highlights the need to increase the number of drugs listed on MDCH's Web site. There are currently no drugs on the site to treat major diseases such as diabetes, osteoporosis, or active heart disease.

- A. Multi-Community May 2007 Drug Survey Master Spreadsheet (with pharmacy contact information)
- B. Multi-Community May 2007 Drug Survey Summary (without pharmacy contact information)

C. Individual Community Spreadsheets (with pharmacy contact information)

1. Detroit area;
2. Flint area;
3. Grand Rapids;
4. Kalamazoo area;
5. Lansing area;
6. Marquette/UP;
7. Saginaw/Bay City area;
8. Traverse City area
9. Troy; and
10. Warren.

D. **Examples of Pricing Variances within Communities:**

Each community surveyed had notable pricing variances for a given drug surveyed within that community. Just a few examples follow:

In Detroit, consumers needing a month's supply of Avandia, a drug to treat diabetes, could pay as little as \$198.00 for a month's supply at Family Drug Pharmacy at 10809 Mack Avenue. Consumers who took the same prescription to the Gateway Pharmacy on 15690 Joy Road would have paid \$300.00, or **\$102.00 more** than the amount charged by Family Drug Pharmacy.

In Lansing a cash-paying consumer needing a month's supply of the sleep aid, Ambien could pay \$90.00 if he had the prescription filled at the DeWitt Pharmacy at 113 S. Bridge St. in DeWitt. Alternatively, the consumer could pay \$188.99 if he had the same prescription filled at CVS on 240 MAC in East Lansing. The CVS price is over **double** the price at the DeWitt Pharmacy.

In Flint, if a diabetic took his prescription for a month's supply of Avandia to Flint Drugs on 2308 S. Ballenger Highway, he could expect to pay \$171.20. If the consumer filled the same prescription at Walgreen's on 502 S. Ballenger the cash price would be \$263.99 or **\$92.79 more** than Flint Drugs.

Finally, a consumer needing a month's supply of Ambien would have paid \$90.36 at Sams Pharmacy on 5417 Bay Road in Saginaw if she filled the prescription on the day of the Attorney General's survey. The same prescription on the same day at the Healthway Pharmacy at 1008 N. Saginaw St. near Saginaw would cost that consumer \$188.00, or \$97.64 more than the Sams' price.

**E. Pharmacies with Consistently High or Consistently Low Prices**

Only pharmacies that had five or more of the highest or lowest prices are referenced.

The pharmacies with five or more of the lowest prices quoted in the relevant area are:

1. Upper Peninsula:

LOW: Snyder RX Express, 110 S. Main, Ishpeming, provided 6 of the lowest drugs in the Upper Peninsula.

2. Warren:

LOW: Village Pharmacy, 11012 E. 13 Mile Rd. provided 6 of the lowest drugs in Warren.

3. Troy:

LOW: Troy Pharmacy, 1380 Coolidge Rd., provided 5 of the lowest drugs in Troy.

4. Detroit:

LOW: Blain Pharmacy at 2141 E. Jefferson provided 5 of the lowest drugs in Detroit.

5. Flint:

LOW: Knight Drugs at 8483 Holly Road, Grand Blanc, provided 5 of the lowest drugs in Flint.

6. Lansing:

LOW: DeWitt Pharmacy at 113 S. Bridge St, DeWitt, provided 5 of the lowest drugs in the Lansing area.

7. Saginaw:

LOW: Sams Pharmacy, 5417 Bay Rd, Saginaw, provided 9 of the lowest drugs in the Saginaw area.

The pharmacies with five or more of the highest prices quoted in the relevant area are:

1. Upper Peninsula:

HIGH: Gladstone Pharmacy, 20 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Gladstone, provided 5 of the highest drugs in the Upper Peninsula.

HIGH: Pamida Pharmacy, 491 US Hwy 41 W, Ishpeming, provided 5 of the highest drugs in the Upper Peninsula.

2. Grand Rapids:

HIGH: Walgreens on 956 Michigan St. NE provided 5 of the highest drugs in Grand Rapids.

3. Flint:

HIGH: Walgreens Pharmacy, 502 S. Ballenger Road provided five of the highest drugs in the Flint area.

4. Saginaw:

HIGH: Healthway Pharmacy, 1008 N. Saginaw St., St. Charles, provided 9 of the highest drugs in the Saginaw area.

#### **IV. Public Health Code Requires Price Disclosure**

The Public Health Code requires pharmacists to give drug-pricing information to consumers who ask for it either in person or over the phone. The law is not discretionary. Pharmacists cannot refuse to comply with this provision. The law states:

*Upon a request made in person or by telephone, a pharmacist engaged in the business of selling drugs at retail shall provide the current selling price of a drug dispensed by that pharmacy or comparative current selling prices of generic and brand name drugs dispensed by that pharmacy.<sup>1</sup>*

The statute further specifies that the pharmacy must supply pricing information to the person making the request "before a drug is dispensed to the person" and that a person requesting pricing information is under no obligation to purchase the drug or drugs for which prices are requested.

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<sup>1</sup> MCL 333.17757(1) emphasis supplied. A copy of the law is available at: [http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(au3uw5550h4kvzvgvgi1kzn4\)/printDocument.aspx?objectName=mcl-333-17757&version=txt](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(au3uw5550h4kvzvgvgi1kzn4)/printDocument.aspx?objectName=mcl-333-17757&version=txt).

Pharmacists are also required to conspicuously post written notice of this consumer directly above each counter where prescription drugs are dispensed.<sup>2</sup>

A total of 3 pharmacies refused to provide pricing information. Each pharmacy received a letter from the Consumer Protection Division reminding the pharmacy of their obligation to provide price information under the Public Health Code. The letter was copied to the Michigan Department of Community Health, Bureau of Health Professions.

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<sup>2</sup> MCL 333.17757(2) & (3).