



## The Cost Divide: RAND Corporation's Revelation on Prescription Drug Prices



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WASHINGTON, D.C.— The recent report released by the RAND Corporation, titled "International Prescription Drug Price Comparisons," sheds light on a critical issue impacting many American families, including those within the Navajo Nation. The report's findings are grave: brand-name prescription drugs in the United States cost, on average, more than three times the price of the same drugs in other high-income countries. This pricing disparity is particularly significant for the Navajo Nation, where access to healthcare and affordability of medications are longstanding concerns.

The RAND study compared U.S. drug prices to those in 33 other high-income OECD nations and found that the U.S. accounts for a disproportionate 62% of total drug spending among these countries, despite making up only 24% of the total sales volume. This discrepancy points to the inflated cost of drugs in the U.S. and highlights a significant financial burden faced by American consumers, including Navajo families.

While generic drugs in the U.S. are comparatively less expensive and make up 90% of prescription volumes, they only represent 8% of the spending. This is a crucial detail for the Navajo Nation, where the use of more affordable generic drugs could be a lifeline for many who cannot afford their costlier brand-name equivalents. Unfortunately, the report also indicates a troubling trend in the U.S. regarding shortages of non-branded generic prescription drugs, an issue that could lead to forced reliance on much more expensive branded medications.

The impacts on the Navajo Nation can be profound. Many Navajo families must travel vast distances to pharmacies, often to discover that essential medications are not in stock. This not only results in wasted time and resources but also delays in receiving necessary treatment. When the available alternative is a brand-name drug, the cost can be prohibitively high, putting a significant strain on individuals' and families' finances.

It is crucial for policymakers and the broader public to understand the gravity of this issue. The soaring costs and accessibility challenges of prescription drugs can have dire health consequences for the Navajo Nation, where many already face socioeconomic disadvantages and health disparities. The Fiscal Recovery Act of 2023's budget for the Indian Health Services is already under pressure, and the high drug prices only exacerbate the problem, potentially leading to health complications, increased mortality rates, and further entrenchment of poverty.

The RAND Corporation's report is a call to action for Congress to address these disparities in drug pricing and availability. By mitigating these challenges, we can move towards more equitable healthcare access for the Navajo Nation and all Americans. It is a matter of health equity, economic justice, and moral responsibility to ensure that all communities have affordable access to the medications they need to live healthy and productive lives.