

BIG PHARMA-MARKET FAILURE

Are you concerned/alarmed about the price of your medications? Have you or someone you know gone without taking a prescription (Rx) drug because of cost? This is a problem many people face as drug prices spiral upward. Prices for brand name Rx drugs increased 264% between 2008 and 2015; inflation was 12% for the same time period. Pharmaceutical companies can charge whatever they want—there are no price controls and no negotiated prices. It will stay that way with huge pharmaceutical lobbying. There are around 1300 lobbyists in Washington; two lobbyists for every member of Congress.

All of this and much more was discussed in the eye-opening film, “Big Pharma, Market Failure” shown at Fifty North (Senior Center) in Northfield on Thursday, April 26. Presenting was Northfield Area Health Care for All MN (HCAMN), a chapter of the state group advocating for affordable, high quality health care for every Minnesotan. In this well done documentary, the owner of a manufacturing business who is concerned about his business and his employees, states that their insurance costs are rising by 40%; (\$4.00 an hour increase for health insurance, 1/3 of that is for Rx drugs). It is pointed out that rising Rx costs are not only a personal hardship but a threat to the U.S. economy. Our country spends more on health care and pharmaceuticals than any other industrialized country. In the U.S., the average cost for drugs per person is \$1205 compared to \$515 in other countries. The well-publicized Epi-pen is an example. This injectable device delivers the drug epinephrine, used to treat symptoms of an allergic reaction, for example insect bites or stings. In 2009 the cost of the Epi-pen was \$100, in 2016 that cost jumped to over \$600. The cost of the drug itself is about \$2.00.

The entire documentary, Big Pharma – Market Failure can be viewed online at <https://fixithehealthcare.com/>. As one part of the film, there is discussion about a “fix” to the runaway cost of Rx drugs. Jointly the business community and the general public need to come together and **demand** the establishment of negotiated, regulated drug prices. This is how drug pricing is kept low in much of the world.

Each of us needs to contact our elected Senators and Representatives in Congress making it clear we want laws enacted to bring about negotiated drug pricing. Go to <https://whoismyrepresentative.com> to find information for Senators Amy Klobuchar, Tina Smith and your Representative. Leave a voice mail, write a letter, or send an e-mail. Tell them to take action to bring down the price of prescription drugs. To get involved locally in health care reform issues, contact the Northfield Area HCAMN chapter at hcamn.northfieldarea@gmail.com.