

counter, it won't help patients access or afford their medicines," VanderVeer said in an email.

State Sen. Richard Pan (D-Sacramento), a pediatrician who chairs the Senate health committee, agrees—up to a point.

"Transparency always has value," Pan said. But policymakers need more data on how much insurers and consumers are spending on prescription drugs, he said.

And he wonders why the price of generic drugs, including those with plenty of competition, rose at higher rates.

His concerns were echoed by University of Southern California policy researchers, who recently published a study that concluded most state-level drug-transparency laws are "insufficient" to reveal the true transaction prices for prescription drugs, or where in the distribution system excessive profits lie.

"The question is, why are these prices going up? Typically, there are competing stories for that," said Neeraj Sood, vice dean of USC's School of Public Policy and

About this story:

It was produced by Kaiser Health News, which publishes California Healthline, an editorially independent service of the California Health Care Foundation.

an author of the study. "Maybe cost of production is going up," he said. "Maybe there's a drug shortage, or some competitors got eliminated. This reporting of [wholesale acquisition cost] data doesn't really tell us which of these stories is true."

For now, California's new data is not likely to be of much help to consumers, Pan said. But he said it might help state officials in their bid to overhaul the way the state purchases drugs for 13 million people served by Medi-Cal, the state's Medicaid program for low-income residents. Gov. Gavin Newsom's controversial plan to have the state, rather than individual Medi-Cal managed-care plans, negotiate directly with drugmakers would save the state an estimated \$393 million a year by 2023, according to the administration. □

WEEKLY DOSE



How to prepare when your power goes off

As the winds pick up this fall, rolling blackouts may occur across various areas of the state, including parts of Chico. There are certain precautions that you can take so that you and your family remain safe and comfortable. Preparation is key, but an emergency supply kit is a necessity. Pack enough supplies to last a week, including, but not limited to: nonperishable food, drinking water, tools and utensils, duct tape, a flashlight, a radio and extra batteries, a first-aid kit, a cellphone charger, medication, eyeglasses/contacts, toiletries, blankets and clothes, pet food, activities for kids and copies of important documents. Every family has different needs—just make sure to refresh your kit once a year. And don't forget to take a trip to the bank for cash and to fill up on gas—ATMs, credit card machines and gas pumps may be down. Visit pge.com for more detailed advice, including food safety and utility shut-off.

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