

Pharmacy Briefing | March 2025

The latest on pharmacy news, trends, and insights

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Highlights

- Clarivate publishes annual “**Drugs to Watch**” report
- Drug Channels summarizes **2025 “Big 3” PBM formulary changes**
- **CVS Health** launches **CostVantage** pricing model for its retail pharmacies

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approvals and launches

- **Ozempic (semaglutide)** is approved for the additional indication of treating chronic kidney disease.
- **Merilog (insulin-aspart-szjj)** is approved as a biosimilar to NovoLog (insulin aspart).
- **Journavx (suzetrigine)** is approved as a novel, non-opioid treatment for moderate to severe acute pain.
- **Alyftrek (vanzacaftor, tezacaftor, and deutivacaftor)** is approved as a combination treatment for cystic fibrosis.

News

Clarivate publishes annual “Drugs to Watch” report

- The report spotlights 11 recently launched or launch-anticipated drugs expected to achieve blockbuster status or to revolutionize treatment in the next five years.
- Drugs spotlighted include insulin dosed once-weekly, a novel GLP-1 combination therapy, and an Alzheimer’s treatment.

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Drug Channels summarizes 2025 “Big 3” PBM formulary changes

- Insights include the observation that the PBMs’ private-label biosimilars are being consistently preferred over reference products and other market competitors.
- Drug Channels also suggests that the number of formulary exclusions appears to have plateaued in recent years.

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CVS Health launches CostVantage pricing model for its retail pharmacies

- The model increases the simplicity of retail pharmacy pricing by basing reimbursement on acquisition cost plus a consistent, defined markup and fee.
- The previous model incorporated various markups for different drugs and resulted in the subsidization of some drugs at the expense of other, more profitable drugs.

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Supreme Court to rule on the constitutionality of Affordable Care Act (ACA) preventive care

- The ACA requires most plans to cover a set of preventive services at no cost to members, examples of which include certain screenings, vaccinations, and contraception.
- The lawsuit, *Braidwood Management, Inc. v. Becerra*, specifically addresses the constitutionality of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, the panel of experts that makes recommendations about clinical preventative services.

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Zepbound (tirzepatide) expected to surpass Ozempic (semaglutide) in popularity due to recent clinical evidence

- *Ozempic* was first-to-market in the obesity GLP-1 space and, as of 2024, retains the majority of the space's market share.
- *Zepbound* recently received a unique FDA approval for the treatment of obstructive sleep apnea and also displayed more significant weight loss results than *Ozempic* in a recent phase 3 clinical trial.

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FDA removes semaglutide from drug shortage list

- Semaglutide is the active ingredient in obesity GLP-1 *Wegovy* and diabetes GLP-1 *Ozempic* and has been in shortage since 2022.
- Drug compounders will no longer be permitted to make semaglutide-containing products since this practice is contingent on the product being on the FDA's drug shortage list.

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TD Cowen publishes results of its "Annual Drug Pricing Survey"

- The survey anticipates that brand drug acquisition cost per unit will increase by an average of 8% over the next three years.
- Other observations discuss topics such as the downstream effects of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), biosimilar adoption rates, and obesity drug coverage.

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Coalition of state and territory attorneys general publish letter urging FDA to address counterfeit GLP-1 products

- The letter emphasizes the overwhelming popularity of GLP-1s and how this popularity contributes to dangerous practices such as the production of unregulated and counterfeit products.

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Health Action Council and UnitedHealthcare publish report on obesity epidemic

- The report estimates the cost of obesity on both a large scale and an individual scale, comments on trends between national regions, genders, and ages, and discusses its effect on comorbid conditions.

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