

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Administration delivered on lowering drug prices

**From Seema Verma,
Administrator of the Centers for
Medicare and Medicaid Services**

Varun Vaidya's Oct. 6 op-ed ("Trump's claims on lowering prescription drug prices are only campaign rhetoric") trashing President Trump's drug pricing reforms falls flat. It gives short shrift to the president's accomplishments and unaccountably disparages the Part D Senior Savings Model. This model, which will make new options available in this year's open enrollment, will give the 1.3 million diabetic seniors enrolled in Medicare's prescription drug benefit access to

insulin for no more than \$35 for a month's supply — and often a lot less. That amounts to an average savings of \$446, or 66 percent, per year.

The claim that the policy anticipated to produce these gains for Medicare beneficiaries for the first time ever is "not groundbreaking or innovative" might come as news to the many seniors who stand to benefit.

Crucially, the approach we have taken on insulin could be a platform to lower the out-of-pocket costs of other drugs for seniors going forward.

And that's just out-of-pocket costs. President Trump has made unprecedented progress in list prices as well. The list price of a 10mL vial of commonly used insulins rose over three fold under the Obama administration from around \$80 in 2009 to around

\$250 by 2016. During President Trump's administration insulin prices have barely budged upwards.

This is part of a larger pattern. From 2010 through 2016, drug prices went up an average of 0.9 percent a month. Since 2017, under President Trump, the monthly increase is an average of 0.26 percent, with average prices actually going down in 17 of those months.

These are facts, and they don't happen by accident or chance. The FDA under President Trump has set three consecutive annual records for safe, effective, and low-cost generic drugs being made available to seniors.

Premiums in Part D are down a historic 12 percent since 2017, and starting Jan. 1, 2021, Part D sponsors are required to offer a real-time benefit

tool so prescribers can help beneficiaries know the costs of drugs before they get to the pharmacy counter. We allowed new negotiating tools for Medicare Advantage plans. And we implemented the statute that prohibited gag clauses that prevented a pharmacy from telling a person the lowest price for a drug they are on.

There's much more work to be done, but this president has delivered results. Unlike Congress or the Obama administration, he has finally moved the needle. No amount of shoddy, agenda-driven sniping can change that fact.

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