

Pharmacy Briefing | October 2023

THE LATEST ON PHARMACY NEWS, TRENDS, AND INSIGHTS

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Highlights

- **Rite Aid Corporation** files for bankruptcy, Elixir Solutions to be acquired by MedImpact
- **Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)** recommends Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) consider reclassifying marijuana as a Schedule III drug
- **Federal court judge** ruling limits use of copay accumulator programs
- **Evernorth** publishes *2023 Pharmacy in Focus* report
- **Wezlana (ustekinumab-auub)** is approved as an interchangeable biosimilar to *Stelara* (ustekinumab)

FDA Approvals and Launches

- **Wezlana (ustekinumab-auub)** is approved as an interchangeable biosimilar to *Stelara* (ustekinumab).
 - The drug is expected to launch in Q1 2025 due to active *Stelara* patents
- **OmvoH (mirikizumab-mrkz)** and **Velsipity (etrasimod)** are approved as treatment for ulcerative colitis
- **Bimzelx (bimekizumab-bkzx)** is approved as a first-in-class treatment for plaque psoriasis
- **Xphozah (tenapanor)** is approved to treat patients with chronic kidney disease

News

Rite Aid Corporation files for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, Elixir Solutions to be acquired by MedImpact

- The pharmacy chain will continue to operate its stores as usual; however, it plans to close hundreds of stores across the country.

[Read more](#)

Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recommends Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) consider reclassifying marijuana as a Schedule III drug

- Marijuana is currently classified as a Schedule I drug, which the DEA reserves for drugs with “no currently acceptable medical use.”
- Schedule III drugs are reserved for drugs with accepted medical use accompanied by moderate to low potential for dependence.
 - Examples of Schedule III drugs include *Tylenol* with codeine and testosterone.

[Read more \(1\)](#) | [Read more \(2\)](#)

Federal court judge ruling limits use of copay accumulator programs

- The ruling only allows copay accumulator programs to be applied to claims for brand drugs that have an available generic equivalent.
- Several states have previously banned the use of copay accumulator programs entirely.

[Read more](#)

Evernorth publishes 2023 Pharmacy in Focus report

- The report analyzes results from a nationwide survey of consumers with employer-sponsored health insurance, employers who manage employee benefit for their organization, and health plan leaders.
- Topics covered include the increase in biosimilar utilization, obesity and diabetes trends, drug affordability and access, and the role of pharmacists in the distribution chain.

[Read more](#)

Navitus partners with GoodRx to launch Savings Connect program

- The program will allow its members to access GoodRx pricing automatically at the pharmacy.
- GoodRx offers pricing for certain drugs that can be less expensive than pricing available through a member's pharmacy benefits plan.

[Read more](#)

IQVIA presents Biosimilars in 2023 Early Observations of Adalimumab and Expectations for Future Biologics webinar

- The webinar discusses barriers to biosimilar adoption, pricing dynamics, and current market share trends of *Lantus* (insulin glargine) and *Humira* (adalimumab) biosimilars.
 - In general, biosimilar adoption rates have been steady but slow for both products.

[Read more](#)

Belgium considers ban on Ozempic (semaglutide) for weight loss, following guidance in other countries

- In recent months, departments of health in Australia and the UK have also issued guidance to prescribers limiting the use of *Ozempic* to address off-label use.
 - The proposed ban and similar policies are intended to address supply shortages affecting patients with type 2 diabetes.

[Read more \(1\)](#) | [Read more \(2\)](#) | [Read more \(3\)](#)

TransparencyRx launches as an advocacy coalition for improving drug pricing

- The coalition is comprised of several PBMs with a stated goal of reducing costs for plans and patients, improving patient access, empowering technology, normalizing industry best-practices, and helping companies scale and innovate.

[Read more](#)

Skyrizi (risankizumab) achieves superiority endpoints in head-to-head study against Stelara (ustekinumab)

- The study evaluated clinical remission rates in patients with Crohn's disease over a 48-week period as well as overall safety profiles.

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