

Pharmacy Briefing | May 2024

The latest on pharmacy news, trends, and insights

Brian Anderson, MBA | Principal
Rebekah Bayram, FSA, MAAA, FCA | Principal and Consulting Actuary
Marc Guieb, PharmD, RPh | Consulting Pharmacist



Highlights

- **Follow-up analysis of SELECT trial** confirms long-term weight loss effects of semaglutide
- **Phase III SURMOUNT-OSA trial** finds that tirzepatide treatment reduces sleep apnea compared to placebo
- Manufacturers Teva and Alvotek announce launch of biosimilar **Simlandi (adalimumab-ryvk)**, FDA approval of **Selarsdi (ustekinumab-aekn)**

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Approvals and Launches

- **Beqvez (fidanacogene elaparvovec-dzkt)**, a one-time gene treatment for hemophilia B, is approved and launches with a \$3.5 million list price.
- **Yesafili (aflibercept-jbvf)** and **Opuviz (aflibercept-yszy)** are approved as interchangeable biosimilars to *Eylea*.
- **Benlysta (belimumab)** is approved as a subcutaneous treatment for systemic lupus erythematosus.

News

Follow-up analysis of SELECT trial confirms long-term weight loss effects of semaglutide

- The SELECT trial, originally published in November 2023, found that semaglutide was superior to placebo in reducing incidence of cardiovascular-related death over a mean time-period of 40 months.
- In the follow-up analysis, patients experienced a mean reduction in weight of 10.2% compared to 1.5% in the placebo group after four years of treatment.

[Read more](#)

Phase III SURMOUNT-OSA trial finds that tirzepatide treatment reduces sleep apnea compared to placebo

- The trial studied patients with moderate-to-severe obstructive sleep apnea over the course of 52 weeks.
- As a secondary outcome, investigators found a mean body weight reduction of 18.1% from baseline compared to only 1.3% with placebo.

[Read more](#)

Manufacturers Teva and Alvotek announce launch of **Simlandi (adalimumab-ryvk)**, FDA approval of **Selarsdi (ustekinumab-aekn)**

- **Simlandi** represents the first biosimilar to *Humira* that is interchangeable, high-concentration, and citrate-free.
- **Selarsdi** is a biosimilar to *Stelara* and has an expected launch sometime in early 2025.

[Read more](#)

Madrigal Pharmaceuticals provides *Rezdiffra* (resmetirom) launch update, emphasizes its promising potential

- The drug, approved in March 2024, is the first of its kind to be approved to treat nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH).
- The manufacturer is targeting a nationwide patient population of 315,000 patients diagnosed with NASH and moderate to advanced liver fibrosis.

[Read more](#)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) releases Fiscal Year 2025 Budget proposal, includes biologic interchangeability reform

- Several prescription drug reforms are proposed, such as the removal of the distinction between interchangeable and noninterchangeable biosimilars.

[Read more](#)

U.S. Department of Justice submits proposed regulation to classify marijuana as a schedule III drug

- A schedule III designation would allow for easier access to marijuana for research or treatment purposes.

[Read more](#)

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) estimates significant increases in spend for Alzheimer’s drug *Leqembi* (lecanemab)

- In a user group call, CMS estimated that costs for the newly launched drug would almost triple, increasing from a per member per month (PMPM) cost of \$1.67 in calendar year (CY) 2024 to \$4.67 in CY 2025.

[Read more](#)

Milken Institute publishes “Modernizing Care for Obesity as Chronic Disease: A How-To Guide for Employers”

- The guide is “intended as a call to action and a resource for employers to accelerate the shift toward comprehensive, person-centered approaches to obesity care.”
- The authors created the guide based on interviews with thought leaders in research, technology, care delivery, public health, employers, policymakers, and advocacy.

[Read more](#)

Quantile Health introduces subscription-based access to gene therapies

- The company projects that the market’s annual spend on gene therapies will exceed \$25 billion by 2030 and aims to be an improvement over the current fee-for-service model of payment.

[Read more](#)

Drug Channels publishes “The Top Pharmacy Benefit Managers of 2023: Market Share and Trends for the Biggest Companies—And What’s Ahead”

- The “Big 3” pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs), CVS, Express Scripts, and Optum Rx, are estimated to possess roughly 80% market share.
- Major market changes occurring in 2024 include Centene’s transition from CVS to Express Scripts and MedImpact’s acquisition of Elixir.

[Read more](#)

American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) publishes drug shortage statistics

- The amount of ongoing and active drug shortages is at its highest since 2001.
- “New Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) quota changes, along with allocation practices established after opioid legal settlements” are cited as contributors to controlled substance shortages.

[Read more](#)



Milliman is among the world's largest providers of actuarial, risk management, and technology solutions. Our consulting and advanced analytics capabilities encompass healthcare, property & casualty insurance, life insurance and financial services, and employee benefits. Founded in 1947, Milliman is an independent firm with offices in major cities around the globe.

milliman.com

CONTACT US:

myrxconsultant@milliman.com