

Vision Statement Final

****What world problem are you concerned about?**

The attainability and cost of prescription drugs is a critical issue in under-developed countries due to lack of local production sources or infrastructure to produce the necessary medication. In certain first world countries such as the United States, restrictions imposed by the government reduce the competition resulting in grandly inflated prices for medication [1].

****Why is this problem important?**

Prescription medication is necessary for many to continue living their day to day lives. Without these, individuals would be dealing with constant sickness and some could even die from illness. One could say that medication for many is not a choice but a necessity. The monopolization or lack of access to these vital supplements can therefore be manipulated to extremes in order to extract exorbitant economical advantage over the consumer [1].

The negative effects of high costs affect the population as a whole. Those who cannot afford medication become a burden as the enormous costs are spread among the insured. Others are chained down by the hefty monthly costs of their prescriptions and many more spend a good portion of their salary to keep their own families insured. The result is a much slower economic growth and a weaker market as people have much less left over to spend on luxuries. Additionally, lack of treatment can cause a vicious circle in populations dealing with contagious diseases or viruses.

What aspect of this problem seems particularly important to you?

Easy access to comparable medication is for the most part nonexistent, even in more developed countries like the United States. The accepted interaction is that patients take directly what is prescribed by their doctor, no matter how ridiculous the cost. In many cases, older drugs are reintroduced to secluded markets with inflated prices [1].

That is not to say there aren't many comparable medications available to the public. When it comes to allergies for example, we have slightly different drugs that serve the same purpose like Zyrtec, and Allegra. The key point here is that these deal with common, mild issues compared to other medications. For more specific illnesses drug prices can soar, especially when they are necessary for survival. The issue can be traced back decades, resulting in extreme drug price fluctuations when these drug costs come under public scrutiny [2].

To answer the question directly, the most critical aspect of this issue is how easily the consumer can be helplessly strangled by the costs. Medicine is a luxury that is needed even if it cannot be afforded. Without it, many lose their ability to continue functioning at the high paces that society demands. There needs to be more solutions available to the public at large. Markets are currently isolated, forcing the consumer to cater to the producer. Of course, it is not an arguable topic in the sense that one cannot leave their medicine aside for another time in many cases. It is not equivalent to a new car, or an expensive meal at a restaurant.

The mere fact that the pharmaceutical industry is one of the most lucrative and powerful is a statement in itself to the outrageous situation that is healthcare in modern society. This of course in regards to those of us that are considered lucky. Lucky because living in an advanced first-world country provides the population with social programs that allow us to offset the ridiculous costs in many cases. However, an unfortunate consequence of this is that the incomprehensible prices for medication is not a bigger issue because of the offset of costs over the whole population. As a result,

many families end up paying extreme premiums that go to cover what are known as ‘administrative’ and ‘research’ costs.

Ultimately there needs to be more options. The implementation of this software system outlined below has this idea as its focus. Developing an international medical delivery system that provides people on all parts of the globe access to precious medication that could save their lives or the lives of their loved ones.

****How could a new software system help to solve this aspect of the problem?**

In the last sixty years air transport has boomed. According to Hummels, there’s been an estimated “10-fold decline in air shipping prices since the late 1950s”[4]. Shipping companies have been cutting down response times substantially, with programs like Amazon Prime now offering two-day shipping in multiple countries. All of a sudden the idea of implementing an international medication-distribution system overseen by a medical panel is becoming more and more a realistic possibility. An effective database would be critical to maintain the transparency of the system and to track products. A user-friendly front-end product management and placement website would be necessary for doctors and patients to swiftly find and compare different medications.

The system would have different aspects which will be presented from a product’s perspective. At first any product to be included in the database would have to be approved by the specific panel of an international medical consortium that specializes in the illnesses that the medication is used for. Each panel itself would consist of verified doctors and specialists in that medical focus from across the world. This group would then review the specifications and trial results of the drug. The panel would ultimately vote and approve or deny the medication while providing an explanation as to why.

Once verified, a product will be added to the database and categorized according to country of origin, general, and specific treatments. Once diagnosed by a doctor, a patient could pull up and comparable available verified medication from different countries and discuss viable options with their medical examiner.

Upon reaching a decision, the doctors could enter their pin, the database would send out the request to the given provider, and a verification email would be sent to the hospital before the medication is shipped to the patient's household.

The most challenging aspect of this project from a developing aspect is to design a solid mechanism that will minimize illegal shipments and be able to defeat cyber-hacking attempts. An important differentiation with this model is that users cannot have accounts, only doctors. However, the users can view the different options through the database in order to access cheaper or more reliable medication.

This system will greatly reduce prices of drugs by allowing competition in to a market that is currently sealed off from the rest of the world. It also enables companies the ability to sell their products on a much larger scale. Finally, the creation of this international board of doctors from across the world could replace many of the functions of the FDA which attribute to high costs in the United States. All these different attributes together would have a significant effect on both reducing the price of prescription drugs and making more options accessible to the general public across the world.

Why do you think that this idea will make a big impact on the world?

The pharmaceutical industry works off an outdated model in a world that is ever more connected.

Stringent regulations make the development of new medications extremely expensive to the point where only a few entities can get through this process. Additionally the ability to monopolize an industry within a given region that deals with products that for many are a necessity to life is absurd. The medical industry has existed too long without a significant

overhaul to the way medication is processed and provided. Today's world is that of a much more intelligent population, with significantly lower death rates and the ability to react and seek help when needed. Traveling the globe can be done in hours, and improvements occur at a rapidly increasing pace. The technology at your fingertips enhances knowledge as many carry smartphones and computers now more than ever. On top of this, humanity is becoming increasingly effective at tracking and assessing risk at an enormous rate. The shipping movements by companies like Amazon and UPS nowadays are incredible. There has never been so much precision and ability to know exactly where and when any type of package is at the moment.

Keeping these growing resources in mind, the verification and legal use of comparable drugs produced by the best minds from all over the world should be acquirable by the consumer. The restrictions and protections in place serve the producer nowadays much more than the consumer. The archaic system in place keeps people completely separate from the process of purchasing and managing the drugs. The stigma that the doctor 'is always right' and that comparing drug choices is foolish because people are ignorant has allowed the current system to continue, much for the profit of Big Pharma. Many of these doctors themselves are pressured or cornered by the insurance companies to prescribe certain medications.

The system I propose to begin integrating promises to increase competition by empowering those in need with more options when it comes medication [3]. It opens the door to leading pharmaceuticals around the world to compete in different markets. It increases the transparency of the process, putting doctors without economical advantage in power to approve medication. Finally and most importantly, it would provide the consumer with more options to save their very own lives and those that they care for. The result would be a boost in the global economy, removing the incarcerating effects many medications currently impose on the economical lives of common people.

Word Count: 1700

What sources did you use in writing this Vision Statement?

- [1] Peter. "Why Drugs Cost So Much." The New York Times. The New York Times, 14 Jan. 2015. Web. 29 Sept. 2015...
http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/15/opinion/why-drugs-cost-so-much.html?_r=0
- [2] 19, September. "Manufacturer Reduces Price of AZT by 20%." Los Angeles Times. Los Angeles Times, 19 Sept. 1989. Web. 28 Sept. 2015.
http://articles.latimes.com/1989-09-19/news/mn-111_1_price-cut
- [3] "U.S. Food and Drug Administration." Facts about Generic Drugs. Web. 30 Oct. 2015.
- [4] Hummels, David. "Transportation Costs and International Trade Over Time."
www.krannert.purdue.edu. Web. 2 Dec. 2015.