

Pharmacies are disappearing at a rapid pace in poorer communities, making it harder for already vulnerable people to get needed medication in these

DRUGSTORE DESERTS

By Diti Kohli, Tiana Woodard, Daigo Fujiwara-Smith, and Thomas Lee

GLOBE STAFF

For years, Donna Adams could glide from her Nubian Square apartment to the Walgreens on Washington Street in her electric wheelchair. It was so close, she said, that “in the wintertime, you didn’t even need a coat.”

When her go-to pharmacy closed in 2022, Adams started riding the bus to the Walgreens on Warren Street, about a mile away, for her blood pressure medications and grape-flavored Jolly Ranchers. In January, that pharmacy closed, too.

Now in her 70s, Adams takes the bus another 20 minutes to a Walgreens on Columbus Avenue, enduring further strain on her aging joints.

“It’s not convenient,” she said. “And it’s not acceptable.”

Her anger has rippled through Roxbury the past six months, since the Warren Street storefront became the fourth Walgreens to shutter in predominantly Black and Latino areas of Boston in two years. Protesters picketed in parking lots, waving signs that read, “Hell No!” Residents and public officials alike demanded the company change course. The Rev. Min- iard Culpepper, a community advocate, skewered the

PHARMACIES, Page A14

Pharmacy deserts are pockets of the city where the majority of residents live at least a



1/2 MILE

from the nearest drugstore, and many lack cars to make the trip.

Almost 15,000 people in Boston live in such deserts.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY ASHLEY BORG/GLOBE STAFF, ADOBE STOCK

Steward asks for earlier closures

Says two hospitals must shut sooner than allowed

By Aaron Pressman and Sean Cotter and Alexa Coultoff

GLOBE STAFF

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Steward Health Care wants to close Carney Hospital in Dorchester and Nashoba Valley Medical Center in Ayer by Aug. 31, almost three months sooner than Massachusetts rules generally allow.

The company asked the judge overseeing its bankruptcy for the end of August closure in a 77-page brief filed late Friday. Massachusetts requires health care operators to give the state 120 days’ notice before closing such facilities, which would normally put the two closures at the end of November.

Steward also revealed in the court filing that the state has agreed to pay \$30 million in August to help keep its other six facilities in Massachusetts running until they are transferred to new owners.

The brief was filed after Steward announced Friday it had lined up buyers for those six Eastern Massachusetts hospitals. It did not name the buy-

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2024 PARIS OLYMPICS

At Olympic heights, an age of success

Biles endures in a grueling sport

By John Powers

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Eight years ago, Simone Biles was laughing at Aly Raisman, her “elderly” 22-year-old teammate, for not knowing that her “WYD?” text meant “What You Doing?”

“You really *are* so old,” Biles, who was 19, told her.

“I definitely have to apologize to Aly for calling her a grandma,” Biles said after she’d made her third US Olympic team this summer, this time as a married woman. “Because I feel like I’m way older now.”

Five years older than Raisman was, to be exact. At 27, Biles is the oldest member of the US gymnastics team since 1952 when it was a sport for grown women. But she still is the best in the world and is favored to win at least four gold medals in Paris, just as she did in 2016 in Rio de Janeiro.

That is a remarkable achievement at any

ON OLYMPICS, Page C5



NAOMI BAKER/GETTY IMAGES

Simone Biles, practicing in Paris, is in her third Olympics. She is considered the best gymnast in the world.

An assembly line of medicine where UnitedHealth can maximize its profits

By Bob Herman, Tara Bannow, Casey Ross, and Lizzy Lawrence

STAT

This article originally was published by STAT, the Globe’s sister publication that covers health and medicine. To read the article in full and other exclusive stories, you can get a special discount to STAT+ www.stat-news.com/stat-plus/

UnitedHealth Group started out as a small, Minnesota health insurance company and has since morphed into a modern-day Standard Oil, exerting unmatched dominance over health care in the United States.

It’s no secret that UnitedHealth is a colossus: It’s the country’s largest health insurer and the fourth-largest company of any type by revenue, just behind Apple. And thanks to a series of stealthy deals, almost 1 in 10 US doctors — some 90,000 clinicians — now either work for UnitedHealth or are under its influence, more than any

major clinic chain or hospital system.

But behind those statistics, there’s a lot UnitedHealth doesn’t want you to know. A STAT investigation reveals the untold story of how the company has gobbled up multiple pieces of the health care industry and exploited its growing power to milk the system for profit. UnitedHealth’s tactics have transformed medicine in communities across the country into an assembly line that treats millions of patients as products to be monetized.

Central to these tactics is UnitedHealth’s unrivaled leverage over physicians, whose diagnoses help determine how much private insurers get paid for covering older adults. Dozens

UNITEDHEALTH, Page A16



Sun and done

Sunday: Sun then clouds. High: 75-80. Low: 61-66.

Monday: Mostly cloudy. High: 73-78. Low: 66-71.

Complete report, A24. Deaths, A18-22.

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