



Doubts emerge on Clinton drug price plan

By [ROBERT KING](#) • 9/26/15 12:01 AM

Hillary Clinton believes TV commercials touting new drugs contribute to high drug prices, but the Democratic frontrunner's plan to curb such ads may not do the trick, some experts say.

Clinton unveiled a plan this past week to combat rising prices, proposing reforms long championed by Democrats such as allowing Medicare the power to negotiate over drug prices.

Her plan also took on consumer TV ads of drugs. It stops direct-to-consumer advertising subsidies and makes drug companies reinvest marketing dollars into research and development of new drugs.

"Almost every country in the industrialized world bans or severely restricts direct to consumer advertising because it increases prescription drug costs, and can include confusing, misleading or incomplete information or exaggerated claims if not regulated effectively," her campaign said.

But proposing a plan and getting it implemented is another

story. Congress has continually thwarted attempts to hinder or further regulate direct-to-consumer ads.

"Congress typically decides that any business has a right to talk about their product to whoever they want," said Daniel Mendelsohn, the CEO of the health research firm Avalere Health.

Mendelsohn said that there wasn't much new in Clinton's plan, and that a push toward demonstrating the value of a drug would be a better move.

"That is what health plans are expecting of drug companies at this point," Mendelsohn told the *Washington Examiner* on Friday. "To get your drug approved by a health plan you have to show the value to specific populations and that is where the commercial market is going."

The Clinton campaign did not immediately return a request for comment.

The goal of Clinton's plan is to shift resources from marketing to research and development, which could have an indirect impact on prices in the future, said Len Nichols, a health economist and professor at George Mason University.

"Shifting resources from marketing to R&D at least increases the chances we'll have more innovation and competition in the long run," he told the *Examiner* on Friday.

Another expert said consumer advertising is far from the only form of marketing drug companies use. Some companies rely much more on promoting their products directly to doctors through a sales force, a process called "detailing."

"The government does regulate that type of marketing as well, but it represents a much bigger chunk of spending than television ads aimed at patients," said Michael Sinkinson, a professor at University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School.

Mendelsohn said some drugs are advertised to consumers more than others. An antibiotic routinely used in a hospital, for instance, wouldn't need to hit the airwaves, he said.

Clinton would also change how the Food and Drug Administration regulates ads by requiring any prescription drug ad to be cleared before reaching the public.

The FDA has the authority to regulate prescription drug ads to consumers, but not over-the-counter product ads. Federal law prohibits a drug maker from making a misleading or inaccurate ad.

The agency, however, currently doesn't have a program that reviews a drug ad before it reaches the public. "We see many ads about the same time the public sees them," the agency said on its website. "Many drug companies voluntarily seek advice from us before they release TV ads."

However, if the agency is made aware of an ad in violation

then it can go after the drug maker. Normally the agency sends the drug maker a letter asking for the ad to be stopped or corrected.

Common violations include ads that don't disclose all of the product's risks, or tout an unapproved use. The agency has also tried to tackle social media advertisements. Posts on popular social media sites such as Facebook or Twitter have to include risk information.

That is what got reality TV star Kim Kardashian in trouble earlier this year. An Instagram post for a birth control drug she was promoting neglected to include any risk information.

Clinton's plan was unveiled a few weeks after Clinton's closest competitor, Independent Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, issued legislation that tackles high drug prices.

Sanders' bill does not include anything on consumer ads, but does include some of the same reforms in Clinton's plan.

Her plan was also unveiled amid a public backlash against Martin Shkreli, who dramatically raised the price of a decades-old treatment for parasites.

Clinton fundraising off 'terrifying' Trump

By [ANNA GIARITELLI \(@ANNA_GIARITELLI\)](#) • 2/29/16 10:45 PM

In true "never let a crisis go to waste" fashion, Hillary Clinton

is using Donald Trump's soaring poll numbers to her advantage.

Clinton's campaign team pleaded with supporters to support the Democratic front-runner Monday, pointing to Trump's success on the campaign trail.

In a late Monday email from Clinton's deputy communications director Christina Reynolds, possible Hillary supporters were told "Donald Trump could win enough states to rack up a prohibitive delegate lead, making it almost certain that he could be the nominee" for the Republicans.

"That's absolutely terrifying to imagine," the email says.

Clinton's team then tells recipients they have power to "prevent that hothead from ever becoming our president" by giving \$1 to her campaign by the end of the day.

February 29 is the Federal Election Commission's quarterly fundraising deadline for candidates. Clinton's campaign asked supporters to pitch in and ensure, following Super Tuesday, that she is the Democratic nominee who takes Trump on in November.

20,000 Massachusetts Democrats switch parties before Super Tuesday

By [ANNA GIARITELLI \(@ANNA_GIARITELLI\)](#) • 2/29/16 10:27 PM

Thousands of Massachusetts Democrats have denounced their

party affiliations since January 1 to jump across the aisle and join the ranks of Independent or Republicans.

Nearly 20,000 Bay State Democrats, or 1.3 percent of the party's Massachusetts population, left to vote in the Republican primary Tuesday. More than 16,300 of that group have "unenrolled" or become Independent voters, while 3,500 have joined the GOP.

Mass. Secretary of State William Glavin attributed the switches to the "Trump phenomenon." The billionaire candidate has a significant lead over fellow top contenders Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz in recent state polls.

"The tenor of the Republican campaign has been completely different from what we've seen in prior Republican presidential campaigns," Galvin said. "You have to look no farther than the viewership for some of the televised debates.

If every Massachusetts Independent voted in the GOP primary on Super Tuesday, as many as 700,000 ballots could be cast, with the "unenrolled" making up one-third of the total.

Although Donald Trump has convinced some Democrats to switch parties, his candidacy has also had the opposite effect on some Republicans. A net 5,911 GOP voters have denounced their Republican roots.