

COVID-19 Vaccine Prices Are Going Up. It Shouldn't Be Our Focus.

Healthcare Dive

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Richard H. Hughes, IV, Strategic Advisor with EBG Advisors and Member of the Firm at Epstein Becker Green, authored an article in *Healthcare Dive*, titled "COVID-19 Vaccine Prices Are Going Up. It Shouldn't Be Our Focus."

Following is an excerpt:

Amid a "triple-demic" of respiratory illness, vaccination rates for COVID-19 and influenza are concerningly low. Instead of misplaced attention to the per-unit commercial list price of vaccines, we should be focused on vaccinating as many people as possible to reduce the spread of respiratory illness that can be especially life-threatening for the youngest and oldest Americans and the immunocompromised.

Fixation and hype over the cost of COVID-19 vaccines is not new. It began just as soon as we realized that a vaccine would be needed to bring an end to the pandemic and before vaccines were out of the first phase of clinical trials. Lawmakers relentlessly pressed then HHS Secretary Alex Azar on the vaccine's price and affordability, ignoring the fact that our country had policies and programs for making vaccines available for free.

It would be disingenuous to suggest that COVID-19 vaccine pricing in the neighborhood of \$15-\$20 per dose should last indefinitely. We always knew this transition would occur. Pandemic and endemic vaccine economics fundamentally differ. When COVID-19's threat was at its height, the government had a public health and political imperative to secure adequate supply to vaccinate the masses.

People



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It also wielded significant bargaining power. The massive purchase arrangements made great discounts at that degree of volume more palatable to manufacturers. Now that pandemic fears are subsiding and public vaccine demand unfortunately decreases, the equation is different. Indeed, our nation has seen the exit of manufacturers from the vaccine marketplace before. The potential consequences are reduced capacity for meeting the threat of future pandemics and less than assured supply of routine vaccines. A healthy public-private market is essential to vaccine sustainability.