

Grace Harwell - Persuasive Speech

INTRO: Imagine being in a life-threatening situation and the only thing that can save you costs a fortune... This is the reality many people face with the high prices of EpiPens. As someone with severe allergies and who's spent time investigating pharmaceutical pricing, I am very familiar with the complex world of EpiPen costs. Discussing this issue is crucial because affordable access to life-saving medication should be a right, not a privilege. Today, we'll discuss why it's necessary to reduce EpiPen prices and the impact it will have on society. Despite their life-saving potential, the prohibitive cost and insufficient global supply of EpiPens present a significant barrier to universal access, warranting urgent attention and reform. We'll talk about the history of EpiPen pricing, examine the effects of these high costs, and explore potential solutions to this issue.

TOPIC 1: EpiPens easily accessible epinephrine in a bottle. When you have a severe allergic reaction your body goes into anaphylactic shock and epinephrine is the only type of medication that can heal you. The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology stated that EpiPens started at about \$35 in 1985, by 2010 the price was already up to \$100, and now in 2023 they can be \$600-\$800. "Greater access to epinephrine has the potential to decrease the number of fatal anaphylactic events. Among patients prescribed autoinjectors, only 40% of teens/adults and 60% of children less than 12 years of age had them refilled over a 6-year period in a study conducted by the Kaiser Health System in California. This paucity of renewals might be a consequence, in part, of the high cost to families of refilling these prescriptions." There are many concerns with this. Each EpiPen expires after a year or two. If they are overheated somehow, they will stop working.

An expired or ineffective EpiPen is useless to even keep because it would not be able to help in any severe scenario. There are a few other solutions to allergies that do not include needing EpiPens. Lots of research is being conducted to find new ways to help reduce anaphylactic shock. Many allergy researchers give allergy shots that help to reduce or completely get rid of that person's allergies. This sounds like the end all be all great idea, but for many people with super severe allergies they are not that simple to get rid of. The FDA, the Food and Drug Association, has been approving research trials for oral immunotherapy and types of nuts. I was paid to be a part of this trial for 18 months but ultimately failed out because I was too allergic and my life was at risk too much, and it wasn't up to me to continue and help ease how severe my reaction would actually be. Doctors are continuing to conduct new allergy research, but still need support and

donations to keep the research going, and everyone needs to be educated on how serious this topic is.

TOPIC 2: Now that we've discussed the old prices and EpiPens and why they are so important, let's look into why the prices are up so high today. EpiPens have an extreme lack of competition in the market. There have been many "generic" EpiPens, but they have always failed to surpass the real EpiPens, making it possible for them to charge so much without anyone competing against them. Recently there have been a few small versions of EpiPens created, made so they can easily fit in a pocket or purse, but are still listed at the same prices. EpiPens also have a very high manufacturing cost, which also makes it not worth it for a new brand to come around if they know they would end up losing a large amount of money. There is a solution to this however. One solution to this problem could be implementing government regulations to cap the price of EpiPens. The government is allocating free NARCAN to drug users all over the world to save them from an overdose. There are classes to make sure everyone knows what to do in that situation. A person with severe allergies should not be treated any differently and pay almost \$1,000 for a life-saving medication when drug users are getting their life-saving medication for free.

TOPIC 3: EpiPens are not easily accessible to people because of their extremely high cost and insufficient global supply. The National Library of Medicine found "40% have them available nationally to the general public (on prescription)." Places like Mexico don't even allow people to own their own epinephrine. Story of CABO in ER. The government is the reason for this problem, and we need regulation. Some might argue that government regulation could stifle innovation and discourage new entrants into the market. However, the urgency of the EpiPen situation requires immediate action. While innovation is important, it shouldn't come at the expense of accessibility and affordability of life-saving medication. The government can still encourage innovation while ensuring fair prices.

CONCLUSION: In conclusion, the high prices of EpiPens present a significant barrier to life-saving treatment for many individuals. We've taken a deep dive into the history of EpiPen pricing, explored the damaging effects of these costs, and considered potential solutions. It's clear that action is needed to reduce EpiPen prices. By doing so, we can ensure that everyone has affordable access to this crucial medication. A few years ago I started a non-profit foundation, called The Harwell Family Foundation, to help fund doctors in Atlanta to keep conducting allergy research to help kids, like me, whose lives are on the line daily. I have raised over a million dollars, but every donation counts. Let's

continue to educate ourselves and others about this issue, advocate for change, and work towards a future where no one has to choose between their life and their wallet.

1. **Me** (I have many Epi Pens and have suffered from severe food allergies my whole life)

2. **A study from the Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology highlighting the rising costs of EpiPens.**

([https://www.jacionline.org/article/S0091-6749\(12\)01010-X/fulltext](https://www.jacionline.org/article/S0091-6749(12)01010-X/fulltext))

3. **A report from the National Library of Medicine on the global need for affordable EpiPens.** (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10616381/>)

4. **An article from The New York Times discussing the lack of competition in the EpiPen market.**

(<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/10/well/live/epipen-shortage-allergies.html>,
<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/02/business/also-ran-to-epipen-reaches-for-a-closing-window-of-opportunity.html>)

5. **A policy paper from the American Medical Association advocating for price caps on EpiPens.**

(<https://www.ama-assn.org/press-center/press-releases/ama-urges-epipen-manufacturer-rein-exorbitant-costs>)

6. **A case study from the Harvard Business Review analyzing the impact of government regulation in the pharmaceutical industry.**

(<https://hbr.org/topic/industry/pharmaceutical-industry>)