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## US Drug Costs Far Exceed Australia's

August 7, 2025

— Categories: *Breaking News*



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A medical professional has highlighted the vast differences in medication prices between the United States and other countries, including Australia and Scotland, drawing renewed attention to the challenges many Americans face in accessing affordable treatment.

In a video viewed over 2.7 million times, Dr. Michael compared the costs of five commonly prescribed medications in the U.S., Australia, and Scotland. The examples revealed steep markups for U.S. patients even when dealing with basic treatments.

According to the analysis, a salbutamol inhaler commonly used for asthma costs around \$10 in Australia, compared to approximately \$50 in the United States. Atorvastatin, a cholesterol-lowering medication, is available for under \$7 in Australia, while Americans may pay more than \$2,600 for the same 30-day supply.

Other medications compared included Omeprazole (used for acid reflux), which can cost Americans up to \$326, while Australians typically pay \$6. Azithromycin, an antibiotic, is listed at \$155 in the U.S. but less than \$8 in Australia. The largest discrepancy involved Sofosbuvir, a hepatitis C treatment. In the U.S., a full course can reach up to \$84,000, whereas Australians pay roughly \$31 for a 28-tablet pack under the country's Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

This international contrast has sparked renewed debate in the U.S. over drug pricing regulation and the role of government in controlling healthcare costs. Though the video received wide attention online, policy experts urge caution when comparing healthcare systems directly due to structural differences.

The conversation comes at a time when former President Donald Trump is considering a substantial tariff on imported pharmaceuticals, one of Australia's largest exports to the U.S., valued at \$2.2 billion annually.

In a recent interview, Trump announced an intention to impose a 200% tariff on pharmaceutical imports, possibly increasing it to 250% over time. "We'll be putting an initially small tariff on pharmaceuticals, but in one year, one-and-a-half years maximum, it's going to go to 150 percent," Trump told CNBC. "And then it's going to go to 250 percent because we want pharmaceuticals made in our country."

Economists warn that such a move could have ripple effects. Australia's Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme could come under pressure if export conditions tighten, though the Australian government has so far ruled out any changes to its pricing structure.

Matt Grudnoff, chief economist at The Australia Institute, noted that while Trump's tariff rhetoric is strong, the details remain unclear. "There's been no formal plan yet, and the figures change regularly," he said.

He also cautioned that such tariffs may have more impact on U.S. consumers than on foreign exporters. "If Trump imposes tariffs that increase the price of medicines in the U.S.

right before the midterm elections, I can't see that happening for political reasons alone."

The situation remains under close watch as both nations prepare for upcoming elections and potential trade negotiations that could impact pharmaceutical access and affordability on both sides of the Pacific.