

Is it too much to ask drug manufactures to pay for disposal programs for unused medications?

You decide.



Pharmaceutical products provide great benefits to society. We now have treatments for health problems that both extend and greatly improve the quality of life for many. But the pharmaceutical industry has also benefited...

- Despite the current economic situation, the pharmaceutical industry has achieved remarkable profits in recent years. The 11 largest global drug companies alone earned over \$711 billion from 2002- 2012. Annual profits reached \$83.9 billion.ⁱ
- Americans pay more for their medications than those in many other industrialized nations, even for products made by American companies. U.S. consumers pay 40% more for drugs than do Canadians, triple the amount than do the Danish, and 75% more than the Japanese.ⁱⁱ
- Pharmaceutical manufacturers support disposal programs in other countries where the law requires them to do so. Data collected from disposal programs in British Columbia show that the costs were so minor, companies did not raise the prices of their medications. The same can be expected here, especially since companies will share the expense.
- The pharmaceutical/ health products industry spends more than any other industrial sector on lobbying. In the years from 1998 to 2012, the industry spent \$2,554,159,289.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Pharmaceutical companies spend more on advertising their products than on developing them.^{iv} To make matters worse, a recent Wall Street Journal article revealed that “over the last decade, almost every major pharmaceutical manufacturer has been sanctioned either civilly, criminally, or both for unlawfully marketing their drugs.”^v

Clean Water Action recognizes the benefits of medical breakthroughs and the right of companies to profit from the products they develop. However, protecting health includes preventing these potent chemicals from entering the environment or getting into the hands of those who will abuse them. Pharmaceutical manufacturers reap significant profits from the sale of their medications and have a responsibility to ensure their proper management at the end of their useful life. That is why we believe producers have a responsibility to create secure, convenient disposal options for consumers.

ⁱ Rome, E., Big Pharma Pockets \$711 Billion in Profits by Robbing Seniors, Taxpayers, Huffington Post, 2013
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ethan-rome/big-pharma-pockets-711-bi_b_3034525.html

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.opensecrets.org/lobby/top.php?showYear=2012&indexType=i>

^{iv} Light, D. W., J. R. Lexchin, Pharmaceutical research and development: what do we get for all that money?, BMJ 2012; 345:e4348. Eichler, Alexander, Pharmaceutical Companies Spent 19 Times More On Self-Promotion Than Basic Research: Report, Huffington Post, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/09/pharmaceutical-companies-marketing_n_1760380.html.

^v Guttman, R., Buschner, T., Patients suffer from drug industry's chronic greed, Market Watch/The Wall Street Journal, Aug. 2013
<http://www.marketwatch.com/story/patients-suffer-from-drug-industrys-chronic-greed-2013-08-07>