



STEMBoost Newsletter

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Invitational Season and Upcoming STEMBoost Spring Workshops

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As the Science Olympiad season ramps up, Kennedy Science Olympiad has continued its streak of success at various invitationals, and STEMBoost volunteers continue to donate their valuable time serving as event supervisors. We thank STEMBoost volunteers for their time, and congratulate Kennedy on their outstanding performance at the following invitationals:

Sierra Vista Invitational: 2nd place by Gold

BirdSO Invitational: 2nd place by Gold

Springhouse Invitational: 12th place by Kennedy Blue + Ruby

Kennedy Invitational: 1st place by Kennedy Gold

Additionally, Kennedy's Science Olympiad teams competed at the Kildeer, High Desert, Springhouse, Redmond, and Kennedy Invitational.

STEMBoost is also working on the spring workshops! Details will be finalized and sent out when they are available. Make sure to frequently check your emails and social media accounts to stay updated on the progress of the spring workshops.



Fun Fact

Where on Earth would you weigh the most? (See answer in the back)

What can be done about drug prices in the US?

Joseph Lee

One major problem in healthcare affecting the US in particular is the expensive cost of drug prices, often several times that of other countries. A significant proportion of adults in the US (~7%) are unable to afford their prescription drugs (US News, 2021). In 2018, the average insulin price in the US per unit was around \$100, compared to around \$9 in 32 other countries (ASPE, 2020). This is quite evidently a problem as drugs are the main way treatment for a health problem is issued to a patient, which is why this problem should be considered a foundational issue of healthcare in the US.

This is a multifaceted problem for lower income individuals. Their substandard living conditions contribute to significantly increased risk for a host of mental and physical health problems, yet they are also less likely to be able to pay adequately for the drugs they need, which only worsens their plight as they are unable to receive proper treatment for their ailments.

This problem stems largely from the fact that pharmaceutical corporations are given the authority to set prices of approved drugs that they introduce, regardless of how useful or effective they might be. Furthermore, a new drug often can only be produced by a single company, leading to monopolies, which persist due to patents and a lack of government intervention. The resulting high prices can prevent people from being able to access adequate quantities of medications that may or may not be life-saving.

The solution to this issue would be reforming the way drugs are approved by the FDA. Rather than approving a drug based solely on its safety, its cost efficiency and biological effectiveness should also be taken into account. Then, the government can help cover the costs of especially expensive approved drugs so that citizens can pay less while pharmaceutical corporations still receive a profit. Reducing the period of time that drug patents last would also allow for generic brands to be introduced quicker, which would automatically reduce costs.

There are a few roadblocks to implementing such policies, however. First, pharmaceutical corporations have lots of lobbying power. Lobbying (bribery by a different name) gives these pharmaceutical corporations significant political influence to cause the rejection of policies that might not serve their economic interests. Second, many fear that decreasing the profits of drug development (by preventing corporations from price gouging) will reduce incentive for drug development.

In face of these difficulties, on an individual, clinical health level, physicians can also do a lot for patients by offering cheap alternatives when available and raising awareness for this pervasive issue that currently does not garner adequate attention.

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Answer: Since the poles of the Earth are flattened and are closest to the center of the Earth, you would weigh the most at the North and South Poles.