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## AARP's Debra Whitman Speaks at HHS Forum Addressing Access and Affordability of Prescription Drugs

**WASHINGTON, DC** — Today **Debra Whitman, PhD**, AARP's Chief Public Policy Officer, spoke at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services **public forum** on pharmaceutical innovation, access, affordability, and better health. The invitation-only forum brought together a broad range of stakeholder groups, including AARP, to discuss ideas that will help foster a health care system that leads in innovation while also providing affordable, high quality medicines.

Speaking on a panel entitled "Patient Access and the Affordability of Prescription Drugs," Dr. Whitman focused on rapidly escalating prescription drug prices and how these trends are making it increasingly difficult for people, particularly older Americans on fixed incomes, to afford the medications they need to stay healthy. Below are some of her comments:

"An AARP study out today found that the average cost of one specialty drug cost over \$53,000, more than the median household income of just over \$52,000. This price is also twice the median income of \$23,500 for people on Medicare and almost three-and-half times the average Social Security retirement benefit."

"No one should have to choose between paying for food or rent and paying for the prescription drugs they need to stay healthy."

"American taxpayers and consumers cannot and should not be asked to foot the entire bill for medical innovation."

"We cannot continue to give drug manufacturers a blank check to pay for prescription drugs."

Dr. Whitman also discussed the importance of increasing the availability of research that compares new drugs against existing ones. Known as comparative effectiveness research, this information will help introduce much-needed competition into the pharmaceutical market.

"Right now we have no idea whether a new drug is better than similar treatments that are already on the market. Other countries already require drug companies to provide this kind of information—why don't we?"

"We also think pharmaceutical companies need to be more transparent about how they price their drugs. We cannot and should not continue to simply accept "what the market will bear."

Visit <http://www.aarp.org/rxpricewatch> for more information on AARP's Price Watch Reports on trends in retail prices for specialty, generic, and brand name drugs.

### **About AARP**

*AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, with a membership of nearly 38 million, that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse. We advocate for individuals in the marketplace by selecting products and services of high quality and value to carry the AARP name as well as help our members obtain discounts on a wide range of products, travel, and services. A trusted source for lifestyle tips, news and educational information, AARP produces AARP The Magazine, the world's largest circulation magazine; AARP Bulletin; [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org); AARP TV & Radio; AARP Books; and AARP en Español, a Spanish-language website addressing the interests and needs of Hispanics. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to political campaigns or candidates. The AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. AARP has staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Learn more at [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org).*

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