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Human Drugs & Veterinary Drugs - A Cost Comparison

METHODS

Medicare Part D spending data for 2021 was obtained through the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) online portal to identify the 50 most common drugs by number of beneficiaries.[9]

Veterinary drug costs per tablet were compiled from the respective pharmacy websites and calculated using 30-, 60-, and 90-count quantities from the respective pharmacy websites as applicable; consistency was maintained in only scraping analogous data for each drug formulation across pharmacies (ie. only tablets versus only capsules versus only eye drops, etc).

RESULTS

1800 Pet Meds had the same lowest cost for Famotidine 10 mg (figure 1).

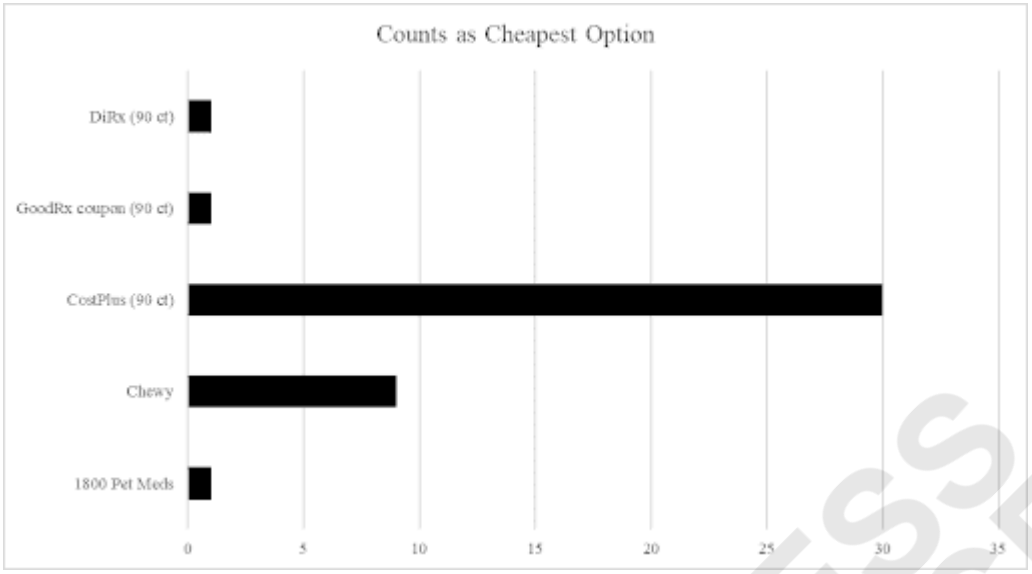

Figure 1 Cost comparison for Famotidine 10 mg

The lowest normalized drug cost per unit (calculated using prices for 90-day supply) was 0.4406 for Cost Plus Drugs, followed by DiRx at 0.5789 ($p < .05$). Cost Plus Drugs had a lower normalized drug cost per unit than both veterinary options ($p < .05$). Both Cost Plus Drugs and DiRx had lower normalized drug costs per unit than GoodRx at 0.7349 ($p < .05$). 1800 Pet Meds had the highest normalized drug cost per unit at 0.9062 ($p < .05$); there was no difference in the normalized drug cost per unit between DiRx, GoodRx, and Chewy (0.6557; $p > .05$) (figure 2).

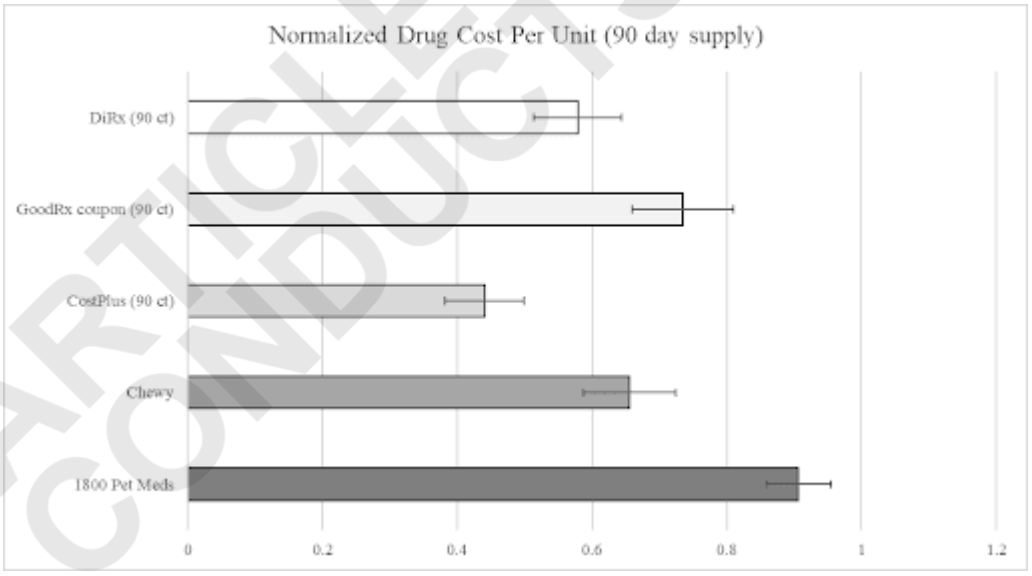

Figure 2 Normalized drug cost comparison

For 30-day supply costs, Chewy was the cheapest option for 30/41 drug dosages studied with Cost Plus Drugs being the most affordable option for 8/41 drug dosages. The lowest normalized drug cost per unit (calculated using prices for 30-day supply) was 0.4665 for Chewy, though there was no significant difference between Chewy and Cost Plus Drugs at 0.5270 ($p > .05$). Cost Plus Drugs

had no significant difference in cost compared to 1800 Pet Meds (p = .0565), but was lower than the costs of GoodRx and DiRx (p < .05) (figure 3).

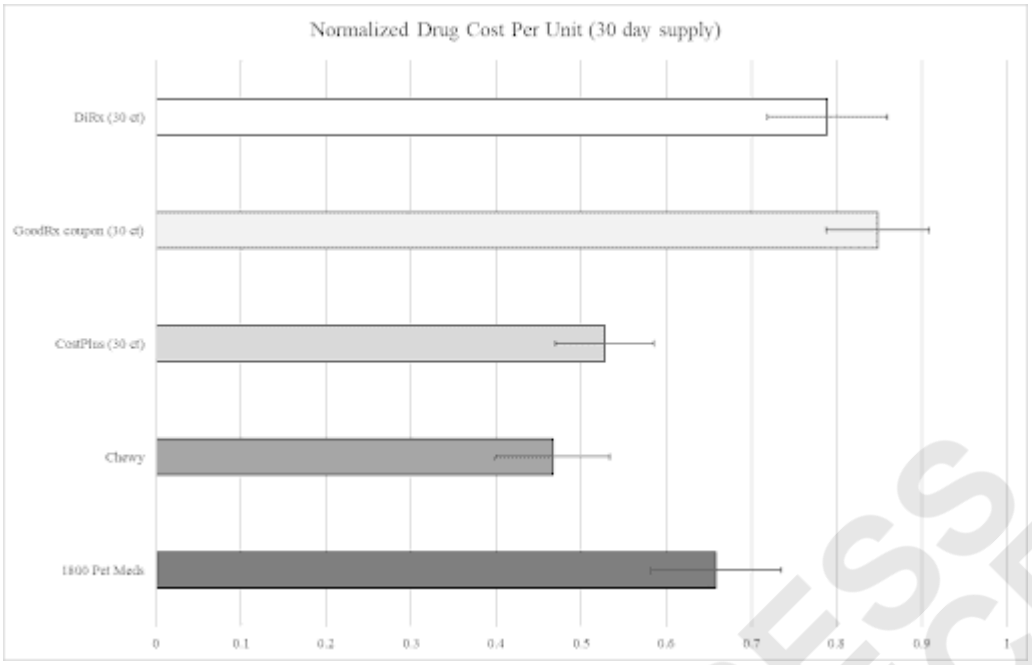

Figure 3 30-day supply cost comparison

There were no differences in normalized drug costs per unit (90-day supply) for antibiotics aside from 1800 Pet Meds as the most expensive option (N=9; p < .05) (figure 4).

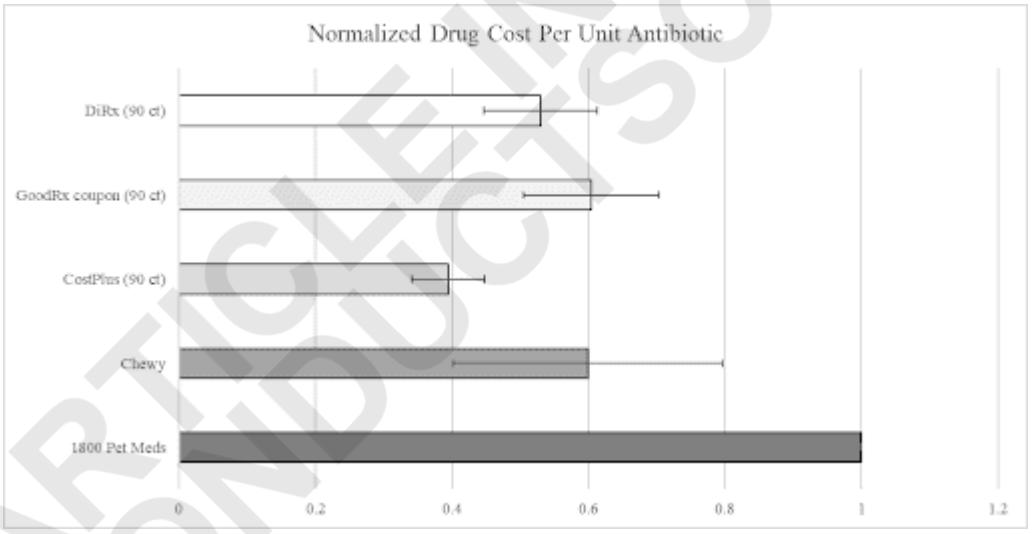

Figure 4 Antibiotic costs analysis

From the sample of four ophthalmic medications (eye drops for glaucoma) that were explored, there was a wide range of drug costs for 90-day supply, with Chewy being the cheapest options for Latanoprost 0.005% 2.5 mL and Timolol Maleate 0.5% 5 mL, and Cost Plus Drugs being the cheapest alternative for Dorzolamide-Timolol 22.3/6.8 mg 10 mL and Dorzolamide 2% 10 mL (note, DiRx did not have Latanoprost or Timolol available) (figure 5).

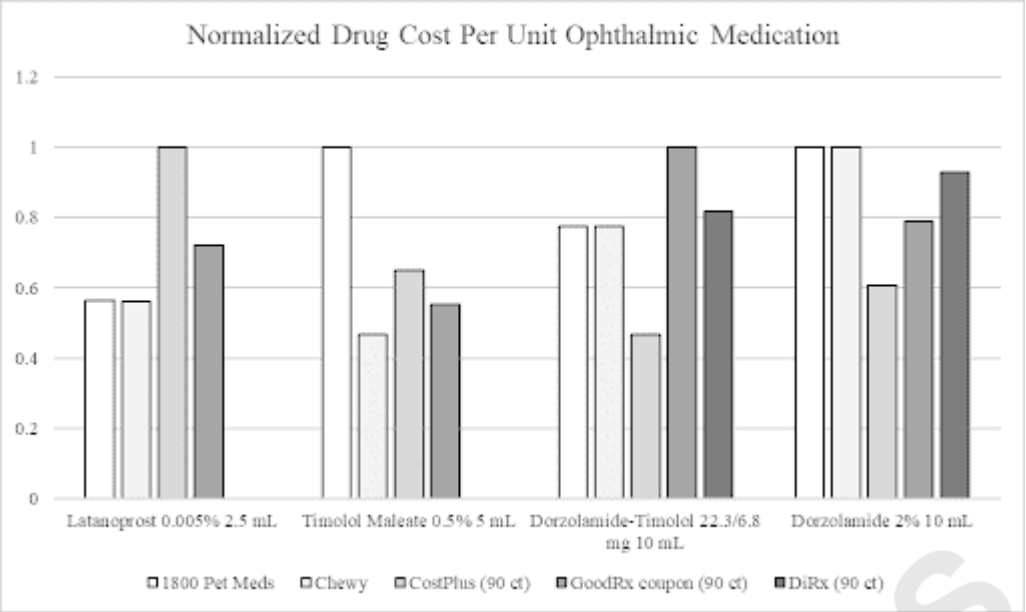

Figure 5 Ophthalmic medications cost comparison

DISCUSSION

While works in the past have indicated that veterinary equivalents of human prescription drugs have lower costs,[8] the results of this study suggest that this is not the case with the emergence of home delivery services such as Cost Plus Drugs and DiRx. Namely, Cost Plus Drugs consistently exceeded other veterinary and human retail providers in normalized drug cost per unit, representing a pertinent and remarkable development in the effort to counter rising healthcare expenditures and pharmaceutical costs.

CONCLUSION

These findings provide a pertinent and current update to the work of Haque et al from 2022, showing that recently-established human pharmacy online alternatives (namely, Cost Plus Drugs) provide affordable options for those in need and represent an addressal of the high costs of human pharmaceuticals when compared to veterinary drug costs.

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