

# The PUTTbulletin

## We're Speaking Up About the Change Healthcare Outage and You Should Too

PUTT members and friends, we need you to help us talk to the FTC.

The U.S. weathered a national healthcare crisis over the last week but most Americans remain unaware of the breadth and scope of the problem. The Change Healthcare Outage - the result of a cyber attack by Blackcat ransomware group - left thousands of pharmacies and their patients without the ability to submit claims, verify eligibility or, in many cases, provide medicine and/or medical care for Medicare B patients, Medicaid patients, or patients depending on drug manufacturer coupons to afford prescriptions.

The media is focused on breaches of patient data privacy while Optum is downplaying the crisis, attempting to spin the situation as under control. But the problem is far greater than patient claims at the pharmacy counter, as shown on Optum/Change Healthcare's enterprise update page. Change Healthcare processes 15 billion pharmacy claims annually and its reach extends to "technology for revenue cycle and payment management to multiple sectors within the healthcare industry"

In their official acquisition announcement last year, Optum said "This opportunity is about advancing connectivity and accelerating innovations and efficiencies essential to a simpler, more intelligent and adaptive health system." Right. Of course it is.

As we've said all along, bigger isn't necessarily better in healthcare. The evidence suggests the more the giant health insurers are allowed to consolidate, the less quality care and protection patients and their providers receive and the Change Healthcare outage, regardless of cause, is just one more example. It's a crisis of emerging, epic proportions with many patient populations unable to wait for "the switch to be turned back on", whenever that might be.

The DOJ has opened an investigation into UnitedHealth Group for possible antitrust violations. We're speaking out against Change Healthcare, and we encourage you to do so too.



LISTENING IN

### Are Transparent PBMs Really Transparent?



**Breaking OUT of the PBM Box**

**TransparencyRx** is a coalition of PBMs that do NOT align with the evil acronym! Listen in for an honest discussion on what a transparent pass-through PBM really is (and is not!), and why the coalition fully supports reform legislation - because, no matter what the big traditional PBMs claim to be doing on behalf of their clients, the data always tells a different story.

**LISTEN NOW!**

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GREED! INGLORIOUS GREED!



**How Optum is Using AI to Spy on Medical Claims and Steal Injury Settlements**

**Company behind Joe Namath Medicare Advantage ads has long rap sheet of misconduct**


**READ IT ON THE FAT**

**READ IT ON HEALTH CARE UN COVERED**

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EAR CANDY

### A Rheumatologist & Two Pharmacy Owners Walk Into a Bar...



From industry-wide issues like prior authorizations, to disease states, pain management, and vitamin supplement shams - when PBMs and their parent health insurance parent corporations meddle in healthcare, the results are never good for anyone.

**Special Guests:** Rheumatologist Dr. Steven Baak, & pharmacy owner Anne Hutchens

**LISTEN NOW!**

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PUTT is the **only 501c3 nonprofit** pharmacy organization **100% dedicated to PBM Reform.**

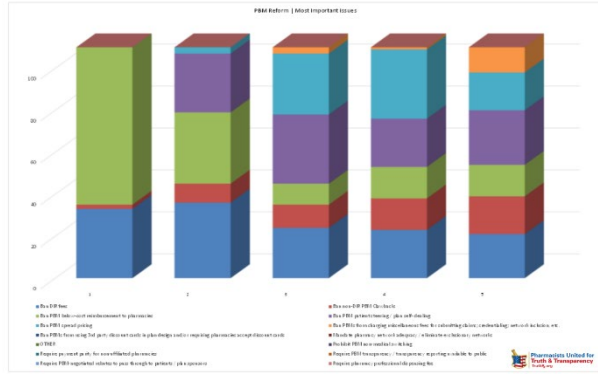
**INVEST IN ADVOCACY**

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**PUTT to Congress: Protecting Pharmacies From PBM Greed and Financial Retaliation Must Be Included in PBM Reform Legislation**

While it was difficult to watch Congress take PBM reform provisions off the table during the last round of government funding negotiations, we now have a unique opportunity to address a glaring omission from Congress' proposed PBM reforms in Congress: ensuring federal legislation creates a fair and equitable business environment for pharmacies free from PBM greed and financial retaliation.

Last month we surveyed pharmacy owners about the current state of PBM reform legislation and what their own legislative priorities are. Some 224 pharmacy owners responded, telling us their top 5 priorities are:



- Ban PBMs from reimbursing pharmacies below drug acquisition cost
- Require pharmacies be paid a professional dispensing fee
- Ban DIR fees. Entirely.

- Ban PBMs from steering patients to PBM-owned/affiliated pharmacies
- Ban PBM spread pricing

Every respondent said they appreciated federal efforts to reform current PBM practices and hoped Congress would remember to include provisions that protect the business of pharmacy.

The most important message we can give to Congress is this: patient access begins with an open pharmacy. But pharmacies cannot sustain if they are not, minimally, made whole for drug acquisition cost and the costs associated with dispensing (bottles, bags, counseling, etc). Pharmacies are and have been the fallback for various PBM revenue streams - nickel and dime-ing pharmacies with claims adjudication fees; assessing overly punitive audit fines for minor, easily correctable mistakes; arbitrarily decreasing pharmacy reimbursements while openly engaging in jaw-dropping spread pricing toward plan payers.

And, though it should go without saying, no business can sustain if its larger competitor not only dictates how much it will make, but has the power to steer and direct customers away to its own store. That's Business 101, and yet PBMs are legally allowed to steer patients away from network pharmacies to PBM-owned pharmacies in most states.

NCPA's "Fight4Rx" campaign includes a QR code you can post in your pharmacy that allows pharmacy staff and patients to contact their legislators to share their support for laws that will allow pharmacies to remain open and preserve patients' right to use their pharmacy of choice.

We have this opportunity, however small or fleeting, to include provisions that will resolve the most pressing issues that have been driving small business pharmacies out of the market for more than a decade. Let's do this!

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**NATIONAL NEWS**

**OCJ**

**AXIOS PRO**

First Look: PBM probe update

Ohio Atty Gen. Dave Yost and 38 other AGs call on Congress to crack down on pharmacy middlemen

**POLITICO PRO**

Overhaul of pharmacy middlemen flounders despite bipartisan support

**TRIB LIVE**

From billionaire Mark Cuban to independent store owners, criticism for pharmacy benefit managers is plentiful

**STATE BY STATE**

Rural pharmacies continue to close as legislature takes another look at regulation

Ky. bill aims to help independent pharmacies get fair deals from medicinal middlemen

Georgia Lawmakers Speak Out on Reimbursement Discrepancies

State Senate introducing prescription drug pricing reform bills

West Virginia Senate passes PEIA drug price reform bill

**SHAMELESS PUTT ADS**

**What Relief Does \$50 Buy?**

- Temporary Feel Good Relief: one no frills mani/pedi package (almost!)
- Temporary Forget Your Troubles Relief: one ticket to a live garage band concert (without online system fees)
- Long Lasting Relief: monthly funding for PUTT's PBM reform mission

Just \$50 a month makes a difference in funding PUTT's push for real PBM reform & enforcement (AND you get a tax deduction!)

Invest in Advocacy [TruthRx.org/donate](https://TruthRx.org/donate)