



SPITZER AND AARP ENLIST SENIORS TO MONITOR DRUG PRICES

Wide Price Differences Found in Common Prescription Medications

New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer and AARP recently announced a joint effort to help New Yorkers get the best price for commonly prescribed medications. More than two hundred AARP members have volunteered to be "Rx Watchdogs" to monitor and report retail drug prices at local pharmacies for Spitzer's drug price comparison website – www.NYAGRx.org

"The escalating cost of prescription drugs is a burden for all New Yorkers, but especially for seniors, the uninsured and those lacking adequate prescription drug coverage," Spitzer said. "With the help of AARP's Rx Watchdogs, we will expand the scope of this website and hope to help more and more consumers bring their drug costs under control."

Spitzer said that his statewide surveys have found that prices for commonly prescribed medications can vary up to \$100 or more per prescription among pharmacies a few miles apart. For example, Norvasc (dosage: 5mg; quantity: 30 tabs), a top high blood pressure reducing drug, commonly prescribed for seniors was \$49.59 at one pharmacy and \$145.04 at another, a difference of about \$100. Since the launch of the website, in August 2004, more than 1000 pharmacies have been surveyed in all 62 counties across the state.



From left to right: Attorney General Eliot Spitzer with Bill Novelli, AARP CEO, and "Rx Watchdog" Volunteers at a Press Conference.

"We are delighted with the Attorney General's efforts on drug pricing because they complement our own," said AARP CEO Bill Novelli. "AARP has been involved in a prescription drug cost containment campaign that includes legislation, litigation and consumer education." Novelli said.

New York State law requires each pharmacy to supply its *Drug Retail Price List* for 150 most frequently prescribed drugs to any consumer upon request. Every month, Spitzer's staff, and now AARP Rx Watchdog volunteers, obtain the lists from surveyed pharmacies and the drug prices are posted at www.NYAGRx.org. Consumers can search and compare drug prices at surveyed pharmacies by ZIPcode or county. Since its launch, the website has received more than 2.1 million hits.

"I take 21 pills a day. My husband and I spend over \$5,000 a year out of our own pockets for prescription drugs," said 71-year-old Rosemarie Cola who has decided to become an AARP Rx Watchdog volunteer. "It's not easy to make ends meet when drug prices keep going up. We want to make prices more transparent to help people with similar concerns."

AARP New York State Director Lois Aronstein said "With the help of the AG's website, New York price lists, and AARP Watchdogs, consumers can get access to more affordable drugs. This project is a testament to the commitment of our members to help older New Yorkers and be a part of the solution."

Attorney General Eliot Spitzer's Health Care Bureau protects - and advocates for - the rights of all health care consumers statewide. The Bureau operates a Health Care Helpline that assists thousands of New Yorkers with individual problems; investigates and takes law enforcement actions to address systemic problems in the operation of the health care system; and proposes legislation to enhance health care quality and availability in New York State. **To share your views or volunteer for the Rx Watchdog program please contact the Editor: Rashmi.Vasisht @oag.state.ny.us**