We can lower price of our drugs

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WE STRONGLY disagree with Alan Holmer’s alarmist op-ed article last Sunday, “Don’t buy drugs from Canada” (April 18). First, drug makers’ low prices in Canada mean that importing could cut Americans’ costs of current prescriptions by $80 billion yearly.

Second, importing is safe. Even the Food and Drug Administration can’t find a single person who has been hurt by Canadian drugs. While almost all Canadian and US drugs are made safely, some corrupt or careless suppliers may sell risky medications. Some desperate patients may buy them. Drug makers drive both actions. (Recall that Prohibition also led to high prices and unsafe bootlegged products.) If importing lowered US prices, patients would avoid unsafe or illegal operators. Today’s rare unsafe imports are therefore a reason to legalize importation, not a pretext for intransigence.

The real drug safety issue is that many Americans can’t afford the drugs their doctors prescribe.

Third, importing could boost drug makers’ research financing. At lower prices, more people can afford to fill their prescriptions, so drug companies can make up for the price cuts with higher volume.

Then all Americans could afford the medications that doctors prescribe. Drug makers could cease wasteful lobbying, marketing, editorializing, and advertising. Instead, they could devote full energy to vital breakthrough research. Ultimately, Americans will realize that we can lower prices without exporting pills to Canada and importing them back.

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