 Patients and insurers pay big for discarded cancer drugs

A recent study has found that the size of vials used for cancer drugs directly results in waste, and a significant portion of the high - and steadily increasing - cost of cancer drugs. The researchers estimate that about $2.8 billion is spent by Medicare and other insurers paying for medication that is discarded.

"You have these incredibly expensive drugs, and you can only buy them in bulk. What's really interesting is they're selling these drugs in smaller vials in Europe, where regulators are clearly paying attention to this issue."

- Dr. Leonard Saltz, head of the pharmacy and therapeutics committee, Memorial Sloan Kettering and a co-author of the study

CANCER MEDICATION DISCARDED

Cause Map

Reasons for the Problem:

- Patients and insurers pay big for discarded cancer drugs
- Many drugs distributed in one-size-fits-all vials
- Medication left over in each vial

Solution:

Possible Solution: Mandate that drug makers provide medications in more vial sizes to

Medication left over in each vial

Evidence: A group of cancer researchers have found that insurers paid drug makers $1.86 and $1.16 on markups to doctors and hospitals on discarded drugs.