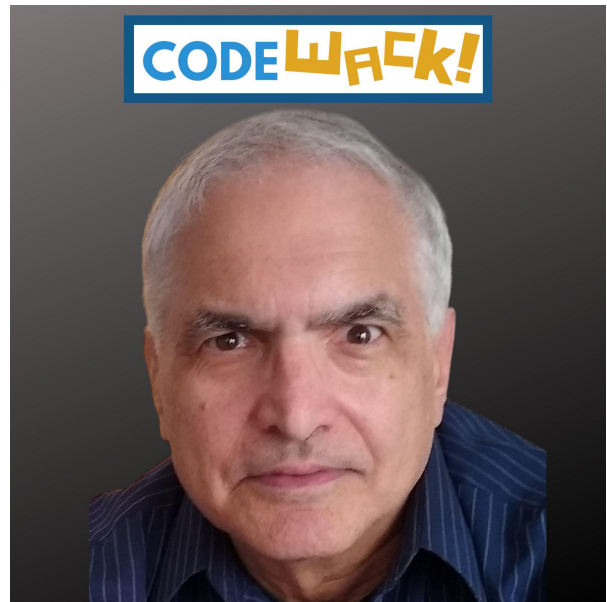


# 'No Rhyme or Reason:' Prescription Drug Pricing in America



## IN THIS EPISODE

**What's up with America's prescription drug market?** Why do some of us pay a lot more for our prescriptions than others? ***How can people on Medicare get the best prices for the medicines they need?***

To find out, we spoke to **Steve Maas**, a freelance writer and a retired Boston Globe editor. The Maryland resident is currently a volunteer for the [State Health Insurance Assistance Program](#) (or SHIP program), a federal-state partnership that offers counseling on Medicare and Medicaid. In this interview about prescription drug pricing and Medicare Part D, Steve spoke to us on his own behalf and not on behalf of SHIP. *This is the first of two episodes with Steve.*

# WE DISCUSS

***This year Medicare open enrollment runs Oct. 15 through Dec. 7. What would you recommend every Medicare beneficiary do during open enrollment every year?***

“...it's a very good idea for anybody on Medicare, whether they have Medicare Advantage or regular Medicare and a Part D drug plan, to see if their plan is still the best. Because in my experience, about half the time people will see that they could get a better plan. It's not only a case with their drugs changing, it's a case of formularies changing and premiums changing. – **Steve Maas**

***Talk about how lack of price transparency is such a big problem for Americans who need prescription drugs.***

“Virtually any prescription drug...there's no real retail price. So you can go to CVS and they can tell you what their prices are, Walgreens, and they'll all be different and if you want to use a drug coupon such as... from, for example, GoodRx.com, it's a very common one. If you go on the internet, you can see these sites that will compare drug prices. You'll notice that you could put up a drug up there and see 30 different prices at different pharmacies. Each chain has a different price, and you can go from day to day and that price may change.” – **Steve Maas**

***It sounds like figuring out the most economical way to buy the medicines they need is a huge burden on Medicare beneficiaries.***

“It is, and what I constantly hear from people is ‘*why is this so confusing?*’ And I help people who range from college professors to teachers to... I was just on the phone with a retired cafeteria worker. I even helped people who were working

with Blue Cross, they were in the back shop, they weren't working on the plans, but even insurance company retirees have trouble making sense of this. You know, even when you use the (Medicare) plan finder as I do, I know after five years of doing this, which drugs are not well covered by Medicare, by Part D and [it] makes more sense to look at GoodRx or some other drug site and get a coupon." – **Steve Maas**

## Helpful Links

[Medicare.gov](#) -- *Click to create a Medicare.gov account, find the best drug plan and more.*

[State Health Insurance Assistance Program](#) - *nationwide site for State Health Insurance Assistance programs*

[California Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program](#) - *California's SHIP program.*

[NeedyMeds](#) -- *Search for manufacturer and foundation help in buying drugs*

[GoodRX](#) -- *coupon site*

[SingleCare](#) -- *coupon site*

[PharmacyChecker.com](#) -- *online national and international comparison site*

[How Medicare Rx Price Negotiations Will Work](#), **AARP**

[Key Facts About Medicare Part D Enrollment and Costs in 2022](#), *Kaiser Family Foundation*

[Explaining the Prescription Drug Provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act](#), *Kaiser Family Foundation*

## Episode Transcript

Read the full [episode transcript](#).

## Biography of M. Steven Maas

[Steve Maas](#), who earned a BA in economics at Oberlin College, spent his career as a journalist, retiring in 2007 as an editor at [The Boston Globe](#).

Since then he has been a freelance writer for newspapers and magazines, with a sideline helping people write their memoirs.

For the last five years, he has volunteered for SHIP (State Health Insurance Assistance Program), a federal-state partnership that offers counseling on Medicare and Medicaid.

After living in the Boston area for most of his adult life, he moved to Gaithersburg, Md., in 2021.

His comments on Medicare are his own and not on behalf of SHIP.

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