# Gilead’s Hep C Cure Was Initially Pitched to Be Half the Price

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Two senior U.S. senators are raising questions about the price of Sovaldi (sofosbuvir), Gilead Sciences' new cure for the hepatitis C virus (HCV), after documents have been unearthed suggesting that drug developers initially considered pricing the treatment at less than half of today's $1,000-per-pill cost, the New York Post reports.

Senators Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) and Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) say their staffs have found public documents from 2011 that show Pharmasset—the original developer of Sovaldi— estimated a price of $36,000 for the treatment. However, the drug's cost was adjusted after Gilead bought out the smaller pharmaceutical company.

Today, a full 12-week course of treatment is priced at about $86,000, a tally that doesn't include the companion drugs many people living with hepatitis C will have to take alongside Sovaldi. In the end, analysts say, curing the deadly liver disease could cost around $100,000 per patient at current pricing.

Gilead continues to argue that Sovaldi will save the health-care industry money in the long run because it is much more effective and better tolerated than older hep C drugs. Gilead has estimated that using older therapies to combat the epidemic could cost between $150,000 to $200,000 per patient. Why does Gilead think older meds will cost more? Perhaps because there's a lower chance that people will wipe out the virus the first time around and, as a result, they'll have to pay for another round of treatment.

Meanwhile, new data show that, in the past six months, Sovaldi has made more money than all other hep C drugs combined. Gilead's second-quarter profits reached $3.6 billion with the new drug since it came out in December 2013. That number is expected to increase as more of the 3 million Americans living with hep C today seek out a cure.

To read the full New York Post report, click here.

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