

EpiPen Prices Soar

A recent spike in cost outrages the public.

By Maya Chadwick and Lucy McGehee

Over the past several years, the cost of two EpiPens in the U.S. has gone from \$100 to over \$600. Just in the past several months, the price has gone up \$100. The price spike has outraged parents and users. Franz Stolpen '20, an EpiPen user with life threatening allergies, was especially affected by the shift in prices. He carries one EpiPen with him. City High has another, in case of a sudden allergic reaction.

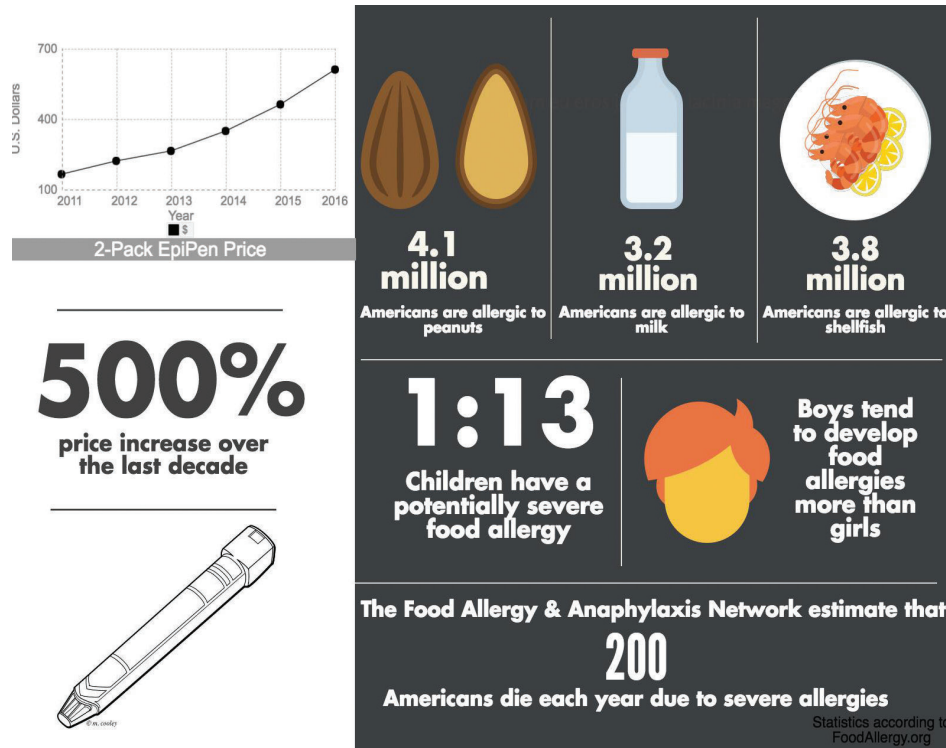
"I found out about the price raise from my parents," Stolpen said. "They weren't happy about it at all."

EpiPen is an injection containing epinephrine, a chemical that narrows blood vessels and opens airways in the lungs. EpiPens expire after a year, so they have to be bought annually.

Some allergic reactions can be so severe that two EpiPens are required to treat the reaction. If that's the case, two EpiPens would be required at school or work, and two to be carried with the user. For kids with such severe allergic reactions, the cost of their medication could be at least \$1,200 a year. Dr. Tess Judge-Ellis is a nurse practitioner and Associate Clinical Professor at the University of Iowa College of Nursing and sees the daily challenges that come from the rising price of medications in general.

"[The rising price] is such a challenge. I see my practice as a partnership with patients," Judge-Ellis said. "This sort of situation would be a problem to solve, just as partnering with someone on the care of a medical illness such as diabetes. Working with patients to find a workable solution is part of being a health care provider. Frankly, affording medications for any illness can be a real challenge, not just for EpiPen."

Mylan, the company manufacturing the EpiPens, announced that there would be \$300 co-pay cards for insured patients, as well as authorized generic versions made costing \$300



for a pack of two.

Franz's father David Stoltz had an EpiPen in the past but no longer carries one. He said that when he did carry one, he paid less than \$10 for an EpiPen.

"Regardless of whether or not the co-pay changes, the overall cost is being absorbed by society," Stoltz said.

Over the past decade, the price of the EpiPen has raised 500 percent. In 2004, the EpiPens were priced at just \$50, but over the years Mylan has been raising the price considerably. Since 2009, the cost of EpiPens has raised over \$500. Mylan has had the freedom to do so due to the lack of a generic version.

"I was shocked that there was such a large increase in price," said Stoltz. "I was also outraged to read that over the past 5 years among U.S. drug and biotechnology companies, Mylan's executives had the second-highest compensation yet they have a much smaller market compared to other companies."

A single EpiPen injects one dose of epinephrine costing just \$1, but Mylan's marketing

technique, which utilized fear of child allergies, increased the demand for EpiPens, resulting in a price increase. Some parents have even been resorting to buying syringes filled with epinephrine from their doctors. Although this option can save parents over \$1,000, it can pose numerous dangers. The risk for error increases if medically inexperienced customers try to administer the drug with the syringe. The syringe needle could become contaminated easily, or the epinephrine could be accidentally injected intravenously. The EpiPen's auto-injector syringe is filled with a pre-measured amount of epinephrine, and can be administered within seconds - seconds that can determine whether or not the patient survives.

"Almost anyone can use an EpiPen, and in the heat of the moment, it doesn't require much thinking beyond the decision to use it," Judge-Ellis said. "Plus, most allergic reactions do not happen close to the hospital, and because of the fast nature of this type of allergic reaction, quick action is required."

Class Sizes Rise

By Lucy McGehee

Teachers carrying cumbersome desks through the hallway became a common sight the first week of school. Spanish 3 honors and Spanish 4 teacher Dolores Silva has faced the effects of the growing City High population full on. Her largest class has 37 students.

"I think the challenge is that some kids are struggling already in the environment, and sometimes there's a huge contrast in ability," Silva said. "So when half of the kids get a concept rather quickly and are trying to move on while students are struggling, it's hard to give those kids one on one time."

Silva has never taught a class of this size before. The level of Spanish adds is an additional factor in the challenges that she faces in terms of class sizes.

"In the lower levels there tends to be more classroom management stress," Silva said. "In the upper levels it's more of getting the information in, and also just the workload, because we do assess more in depth and there is more writing, and the tests are longer."

City High's student population raised 4.3% from the 2014-15 school year to 2015-2016 school year, and it's at the highest it has ever been this year: approximately 1,740 students. This leaves guidance counselors with a tetris grid of classes and students.

"We have more students and the same amount of space. There are only so many classes available to take. As always, the master schedule always depends on flukes," guidance counselor Ben Fraga said. "Sometimes students get the classes that they choose, and some classes always just end up bigger than others. We have disparities in different periods of the day and those classes are messing up the master schedule. Some years it works out a little differently than others. The

combination of different factors like that affect the size of classes."

The Center for Public Education issued numerous studies that focused on the effect of large class sizes in school districts across the country in the early 2000's and came to an "inconclusive analysis" that it put any student's learning in jeopardy. With that being said, they did acknowledge that many variables, such as qualifications of teachers, could skew the results of the studies. They did conclude, however, that kindergarten through third grade is a crucial time to have a small teacher to student ratio, given that in this time period students are learning vital skills such as writing and reading.

The cost for a smaller student to teacher ratio would lie in the salaries of new teachers needed to create the smaller classes. Shannon James '17 is currently taking the popular elective Bible as Literature. The class of approximately 37 students could not fit into Mrs. Borger-Germann's room, so a necessary change of scenery to the Little Theater was made to accommodate the size of the class.

"It was weird [going to class in the Little Theater] at first, but now I sort of like it just because I think we're all used to it," James said.

James also appreciates the many accessible perspectives that develop into fruitful class conversations.

"Being in a big class like Bible as Lit is really helpful in situations where we have large group discussions," James said. "There never really seems to be a time when there is nobody participating, and I feel like we get a lot accomplished that way."

The addition of advisory has helped students that need or desire the one-on-one interactions with teachers. However, Silva has

observed that the effect of large classes have seeped through to this free time as well.

"Advisory can help, but I think that that's not the only class with a lot of kids so they have a lot of the same problems in other classes [of not being heard]," Silva said. "The other thing too is that my advisory class is a large class. That was the other fear; if I need to help them here plus having others [come in for help]."

James sees advisory as an opportunity to make up for the lack of one-to-one teaching in larger classes.

"I know I've had some problems [in large classes], but advisory really helps to ease a lot of that now," James said.

To make up for the lost one-on-one time, Silva has adjusted her teaching plan so it can cater to the top students of the class as well as the ones struggling. She makes supplemental worksheets and materials as well.

"One time they couldn't hear me because they were so engaged in the assignment and activity that they didn't realize that I was talking," Silva said. "There are changes in the big group setting and types of activities, and I am able to change some of the pacing."

Each subject also tends to have its own specific challenges for both for students and teachers, but the general struggle of managing the large class is the same from room to room, and subject to subject.

"I think subject wise languages are their own beasts, because we teach different content and then we teach language skills also," Silva said. "I think that the dynamic is a little bit different, but I think the challenges that we face as teachers compared with other classes are the same."

Snapchat Banned at City

An uproar has followed the district's decision to ban the popular app.

By Corbin Nguyen and Anna Roemerman

City High classrooms are aiming for a higher productivity level compared to previous years. With the start of this new school year, many things have been changed, some for the better and some for the worst. Students were surprised to see that the widely used app "Snapchat" was blocked on the school internet and only the website is accessible, in order to cut back on the use of cellphones in class. The reaction from students came in almost completely negative.

"I don't see a point to having Snapchat blocked," Mikayla Lacey '17 said. "People are just going to use their data or download a VPN to get around it."

Annoyed at the new block, students searched for ways around the problem. Soon students learned of VPNs, which stands for Virtual Private Network. They allow for the

"MORE KIDS ARE ATTENTIVE, MORE KIDS PUT [THEIR PHONES] AWAY AND KEEP THEM AWAY."

JOHN BURKLE

use of the Internet as if you were present at the VPN's location, which has some benefits if you're using public Wi-Fi or want to access geo-blocked websites. Some students didn't even bother to get a VPN, because they didn't want to pay money for the VPN, or simply used their data to use Snapchat instead of using the school wifi.

"I don't want to use my data at school, so I usually don't even use Snapchat when I'm at school, plus with the new phone policy, I put my phone away during class and use it during my opens," Fischer Kimm '17 said.

Though the block proved to be semi effective because of the students that didn't want to use their data or the VPNs trials ended, A new policy followed with the block, phones were to be stowed away during class time, unless told otherwise. This new policy so far this year has been shown rather effective, and according to City High teacher John Burkle, it has so far shown improvement compared to previous years.

"In the past, phones have been a big problem. You get kids who are on them all the time, and the communication can be a problem, taking pictures of assignments and sharing them, and just the integrity of your class can come into question," Burkle said.

With the combination of Snapchat being blocked and the new phone policy occurring this year, it is apparent that cell phone usage is being cracked down on in classrooms.

"More kids are attentive, more kids put them away and keep them away," Burkle said.