

PNC PHARMA & LIFE SCIENCES

Monthly News Brief

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[Senate Unanimously Endorses Legislation Targeting Pharma ‘Patent Thicketing’](#) *(Fierce Pharma)*

The Senate unanimously endorses legislation which looks to limit the number of patents drugmakers can assert on individual biological products. The bill aims to fight “patent thickening,” a tactic that the branded drug industry uses to delay competition. Patent thickening occurs when drug companies stack secondary drug patents to create a complex web of intellectual property that’s hard for generic developers to navigate. The bill sponsor stated that this long-overdue legislation would promote competition and lower prices without standing in the way of innovation. The CBO forecasts \$1.8B in taxpayer savings over the span of a decade

[How FTC’s Battle with PBMs Could Reshape the Pharmaceutical Industry](#) *(Forbes)*

The FTC is reportedly suing CVS Caremark, Express Scripts and OptumRX claiming these PBMs are manipulating the market by steering patients toward more expensive drugs, driven by higher rebates from manufacturers, and excluding cheaper alternatives from their formularies. This investigation may bring transparency to the prescription drug market. Each PBM is integrated with a national health insurer and collectively handle ~80% of the US’s prescriptions and negotiate discounts with drug manufacturers. Vertically integrated PBMs appear to prefer their own affiliated businesses, creating conflicts of interest as PBMs steer patients to their affiliated pharmacies which can disadvantage unaffiliated pharmacies and increase prescription drug costs

[Guardant Wins FDA Approval for Colon Cancer Blood Test](#) *(MedTech Dive)*

The FDA approved Guardant Health’s Shield blood test as a primary screening option for colorectal cancer in average risk adults 45 and older. The persistent gap in colorectal cancer screening rates shows that the existing screening options do not appeal to millions of people. Guardant is positioning the blood test, which can be completed during a routine doctor visit, as a more pleasant and convenient alternative to colonoscopy or stool-based tests encouraging more people to undergo colorectal cancer screening. The test detects alterations associated with colorectal cancer by sequencing the cell-free DNA from a patient’s blood sample

[Supreme Court Overrules Chevron Deference, Dealing Blow to Federal Healthcare Agencies](#) *(Fierce Healthcare)*

The U.S. Supreme Court overturned the Chevron deference, stripping power from federal agencies to interrupt and enforce regulations. Under the long-standing precedent, courts are required to determine whether an agency’s interpretation of a law is reasonable. Now that Chevron is overturned and no longer permissible, courts do not have to defer to reasonable agency interpretation. In healthcare regulation, agencies must now demonstrate that their interpretations are not only allowable but optimal. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services will likely be under a microscope from the courts going forward, and there will be more scrutiny towards provider reimbursement cuts, drug pricing regulation and the Inflation Reduction Act

[MedTech Firms Have Cut More Than 14,000 Jobs in the Past 18 Months](#) *(MedTech Dive)*

Medical device companies have been steadily cutting jobs the past 18-months, as firms look to lower costs, close facilities or restructure businesses. More than 14,000 employees have been laid off since the start of 2023. The diagnostics industry has taken the largest hit, with more than 5,000 layoffs, as testing demand has plummeted from its COVID-19 peaks. Some of the industry’s biggest players have cut positions, including Johnson & Johnson, Medtronic, Abbott and Thermo Fisher Scientific

[Private Biotech M&A Surges Amid Difficult IPO Market](#) *(BioPharma Dive)*

At the start of 2024, optimism had returned to biotech. Investor cash flowed back toward drug companies and initial public offerings, a useful barometer of the sector’s health, picked up in a sign of the market’s strengthening. IPOS have since slowed, taking their place have been private biotech acquisitions, a phenomenon industry watchers say is driven by the abundance of mature, but not yet public, drug startups. As of mid-July, 13 of the 26 acquisitions worth at least \$50 million in upfront value this year were of private biotechs, surpassing the pace set in each of the previous six years

[Top 5 MedTech Deals in the First Half of 2024](#) *(MedTech Dive)*

The first half of 2024 brought a series of billion-dollar MedTech deals across multiple sub-sectors. Johnson & Johnson’s \$13.1 billion takeover of Shockwave Medical easily tops the list as the most expensive purchase so far this year, but several other companies announced deals greater than \$1B of their own, including BD and Boston Scientific

[Where Kamala Harris Stands on Three Key Pharma Issues](#) *(BioPharma Dive)*

Harris has shown support for drug pricing reform and took a hard line in several suits against pharma companies during her tenure as attorney general in California. Harris played a pivotal role in the Biden Administration passing the Inflation Reduction Act by casting the “tie-breaking vote” for the law in the Senate. The IRA also created new out-of-pocket caps on Medicare Part D plans. In May, she said she intended to expand cost caps beyond Medicare recipients. Since the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, Harris has made herself a central figure in the fight for women’s healthcare and abortion access, including abortion medication

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