

Orlando Sentinel
OPINION

GUEST COLUMNIST

Cheap drugs from Canada
can't make America healthy

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration just announced plans to help states and Indian tribes purchase certain prescription drugs from Canada, where brand-name medicines tend to be cheaper because the government caps their price. The new guidance is part of a larger Trump administration effort to cut drug prices for Americans.

But states should think twice before opening their borders to foreign drugs. Aside from being impractical, the new importation strategy would leave America's drug supply vulnerable to dangerous counterfeit medicines from abroad.

Let's start with the logistical hurdles. Canada is by no means eager to share its medicines with American patients. In response to a drug importation program launched by Florida last year, the Canadian health minister made clear that his government would "do everything in our power to make sure that another country cannot be given the ability to pillage our health system for its own benefit."

The Canadian health agency reiterated that position after the FDA's latest announcement, stating that it is "taking all necessary action (to) safeguard the drug supply and ensure Canadians have access to the prescription drugs they need."

That might help explain why Florida's importation program — the first of its kind in the nation — has yet to purchase a single Canadian drug since garnering FDA approval over a year ago.

Further, most of the drugs consumed in the United States — more than nine in 10 — are generics, which are cheaper here than in our northern neighbor. The relative prices of generics in Canada are 256% of those in the United States, according to research published this month by economist Tomas Philipson and two colleagues at the University of Chicago.

There's no point in importing Canada's more expensive generics.

And it's far from clear that the brand-name drugs Americans may be looking for will even be able for importation. Of 287 drugs launched in the developed world between 2018 and 2022, just 28% were available in Canada by the end of 2022, according to research from RAND. Nearly three-quarters of them were available in the United States.

The Fraser Institute, a Canadian think tank, looked at 218 drugs approved in both Canada and the United States — and found



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that they were approved a median of 289 days earlier in the United States than in Canada.

Even if Canada couldn't wait to sell us the medicines it has in stock at lower prices, President Trump's importation plan would put American lives at immense and needless risk.

Counterfeit medicines are a real and growing global health threat — one that takes roughly a million lives

every year, according to the World Health Organization. Falsified or substandard medicines currently account for about 10% of drugs in low- and middle-income countries, the WHO estimates.

Here in the United States, counterfeit pills were suspected to be involved in more than 2,400 overdose deaths in 2021 alone.

One might think that medicines shipped in from a country as developed as Canada would carry little risk. But Canada's drug-safety standards don't apply to medicines exported to other nations.

The FDA manages to secure America's drug supply by enforcing a "closed" drug distribution system — one in which medicines are tightly controlled from the moment they're manufactured to the moment they're dispensed by a pharmacist.

The FDA doesn't have the capacity — or the authority — to monitor every drug that enters Canada and may eventually be exported to the United States.

Finally, drug importation would prove disastrous for the research ecosystem that has made America the world's leader in drug innovation for decades.

Importing Canadian drugs means importing price controls. And that will deprive drug makers of revenue. They'll cut their investments in research and development in response. And that means fewer new therapies for the next generation of patients. Diseases that might have been cured in the absence of widespread price controls might continue to cause undue suffering.

Importation will not make drugs more affordable for Americans. It puts their safety — and future innovation — at risk. In this case, the best strategy is one that should come naturally to the Trump administration: Buy American.

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GUEST COLUMNIST

Superman represents goodness,
protection and hope

Fan anticipation for the new Superman movie, which opens July 11 nationwide, has been high. Filmmaker James Gunn reported after the first trailer release, "With over 250 million views and a million social posts, Superman is officially the most viewed and the most talked about trailer in the history of both DC and Warner Bros." Gunn explains that as a child he "loved the purity of Superman" and emphasized this Superman is "noble ... beautiful ... good."

Evidence of Superman's kindness, compassion and love are plentiful in this 2025 film. He remains a symbol of hope for hurting people. He shields a young girl from an explosion. He stops a war. A young boy in a war zone carries a flag bearing Superman's red "S." But in some cases, the people of Earth reject him.

Gunn said, "It's a movie about kindness. It's a movie about being good. ... I knew that I wanted to have a Superman that stayed true to his origins of being the ultimate good guy." "Look up" is a poster tagline. The film blends adventure, humor, and heart. At times, I found myself applauding. Plus, superpooch Krypto is a hoot.

Superman 2025 is the latest in a long line of media depictions of the dashing visitor from another planet who fights bad guys (Earthlings and aliens), rescues people in distress, inspires hope and seeks justice.

Superman has starred in eight films in the last 50 years and Superman-themed television series since the 1950s are numerous. This ubiquitous media presence reflects the story's enduring public appeal.

As a child, I regularly donned my Superman costume to watch George Reeves play the hero on television. Seeing someone good and strong standing for "truth, justice and the American way" inspired me. Adulthood and extensive global travel have broadened my appreciation of other cultures. The truth and justice themes — plus hope — still resonate deeply. The saga's roots are instructive regarding these themes.

Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, two Jewish teenagers in Cleveland created the Superman story during the Great Depression in the 1930s, eventually for DC's Action Comics. DC paid them



Rusty Wright

\$130 for character rights. In 2024, an Action Comics No. 1 comic book (featuring Superman's first appearance) sold for \$6 million.

Both Siegel and Shuster were from families that had fled Eastern European persecution. Pop-culture historian Roy Schwartz notes that the boys grew up in "a predominantly Jewish neighborhood" and "attended Hebrew school."

Schwartz describes biblical themes in the Superman saga. Jor-El on the dying planet Krypton, named his son Kal-El. El is a Hebrew name for God. Jor-El launched his only son in a capsule toward Earth. Similarly, Moses' mother placed her baby in a basket by the Nile to shield him from a murderous edict. The adult Moses became his people's deliverer.

A father sends his only son to Earth, to be a savior. Both sons had surrogate Earthly fathers. Their youth helped them "experience, understand and cherish humanity." Superman 2025 displays Clark Kent's efforts to balance his human and alien experiences.

In both film and comics, Superman has died and reappeared alive. Jesus, of course, claimed to be the "resurrection and the life." Filmmakers have seen dollars in these themes. The Hollywood Reporter says Warner Bros. tapped Superman/Jesus parallels seeking faith-based audiences for Man of Steel.

At first, years ago, I doubted that biblical Superman parallels existed. Were overzealous Christians seeking social relevance by forcing a connection? But, with study, the parallels became clear.

Similarly, as a faith skeptic, I doubted the biblical story of Jesus' sacrificial death and physical resurrection. Then, historical evidence convinced me it was factual, that he could provide genuine goodness, protection, and hope to anyone who asked.

Humans desire goodness, protection and hope. Which is probably why the Superman story still connects so widely today. Where do you find goodness, protection and hope?

Rusty Wright, who is based in Orlando, is an author and lecturer who has spoken on six continents.

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