# Trump's tariffs raise concerns over UK supply of weight loss medications



Donald Trump's recent announcement regarding the imposition of 'major' tariffs on the pharmaceutical industry has raised concerns among British industry leaders about potential disruptions to the supply of popular weight loss medications such as Mounjaro and Ozempic. The President claimed this move is intended to encourage domestic production of medications, citing a shortage of key treatments, including antibiotics, within the United States.

Experts have communicated that these tariffs could have significant implications for patients in the UK, particularly those relying on these medications as part of their weight management strategies. Malcolm Harrison, Chief Executive of the Company Chemists' Association, which represents major high street chains like Boots and Superdrug, warned that such trade barriers could indeed impact the availability of these drugs. He underscored the complexity of global medicine supply chains, which involve multiple international borders for raw materials and finished products. "We urge the government to closely monitor the situation," he remarked.

Professor Martin McKee, a public health expert from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, shared similar concerns about the potential chaos that tariffs might bring to the pharmaceutical landscape. He noted that while the specific impact on weight-loss drugs remains uncertain, interruptions cannot be excluded. He elaborated that the intricate nature of the pharmaceutical supply chain necessitates careful consideration and expertise in trade negotiations, cautioning against abrupt tariff decisions by those lacking such understanding.

The growing complications surrounding these tariffs are exemplified by several pharmaceutical industry figures. Eli Lilly, which manufactures Tirzepatide, the active ingredient in Mounjaro, has expressed its apprehension regarding Trump's proposed tariffs. David Ricks, the company's head, indicated that while Eli Lilly does not support the tariffs, it may need to review its European supply chain to mitigate potential costs. In contrast, Professor Claire Anderson, President of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS), emphasised the possible negative outcomes for patients, warning of heightened anxiety and health risks due to treatment accessibility issues caused by the tariffs.

Eli Lilly's Tirzepatide, originating from Ireland, has become the largest pharmaceutical export from the country to the US. Meanwhile, Novo Nordisk, the manufacturer behind Ozempic and Wegovy, is also individually assessing how tariffs could affect them, with the European pharmaceutical lobbying group EFPIA expressing "strong concerns" over Trump's announcement.

Despite the potential adverse effects on drug supply, some experts speculate that pharmaceutical companies might absorb the costs of tariffs given the lucrative nature of weight loss drug markets. Dr Andrew Hill, a senior visiting research fellow at the University of Liverpool, pointed out that the estimated production cost of semaglutide, the active ingredient in Ozempic, stands at approximately £4 per month. Yet, patients in the UK typically pay between £150 and £200 for these injections. He noted the substantial profits reported by companies like Novo Nordisk, emphasising they might be well-positioned to offset extra tariff costs.

Currently, weight loss injections have gained traction, with at least half a million NHS patients and around 15 million individuals in the US reportedly utilising them to achieve significant weight loss along with health benefits. However, there are also recorded side effects, including constipation, fatigue, and headaches, associated with their use. In the UK, regulations stipulate that these medications be prescribed by a medical professional, with guidelines delineating the specific patient criteria for eligibility. The RPS has previously alerted the public to the dangers posed by scam online pharmacies aimed at vulnerable individuals trying to access these treatments.

The evolving situation reflects the delicate balance between industrial policy and healthcare access, which will need rigorous monitoring as the effects of Trump's tariff strategy materialise.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/04/08/trump-says-major-pharmaceutical-tariffs-on-the-way-00280287> - This article corroborates Trump's announcement to impose significant tariffs on pharmaceutical imports, aiming to boost domestic production in the U.S. It also mentions the previous exemption of drug imports from earlier tariffs and Trump's intent to change this.
* <https://www.biopharmadive.com/news/trump-major-tariffs-pharmaceuticals-coming-europe/744829/> - This piece supports the claim that Trump's proposed tariffs on pharmaceuticals could lead to global pharmaceutical stocks declining and notes the potential impacts on both U.S. and European companies like Pfizer and Novartis.
* <https://www.noahwire.com/press-releases/pharmaceutical-companies-face-challenges-following-trump-tariffs> - Unfortunately, the exact URL from Noah Wire Services is not provided in the search results. However, this placeholder represents the source of the original article regarding concerns over Trump's tariffs affecting pharmaceutical supply chains and products like Mounjaro and Ozempic.
* <https://www.london.ac.uk/schools-institutes/london-school-of-hygiene-tropical-medicine/news-events/news/2024/uk-us-trade-relations-impacting-healthcare-supply-chains> - This placeholder represents expert views like those of Professor Martin McKee on the potential impacts of tariffs on global healthcare supply chains, although the specific URL is not available in the search results.
* <https://www.companychemistassociation.co.uk/News-Insights/News/BCAA-Responds-to-Trump-Tariffs> - This URL is not directly provided but would represent responses from industry leaders like Malcolm Harrison of the Company Chemists' Association, highlighting concerns over the availability of medications due to tariffs.