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UnitedHealth Raising Dividend

UnitedHealth Group Inc. will raise its quarterly dividend 30 percent as the health insurer and its competitors continue to benefit from strong performances that have left them flush with cash. The insurer said the dividend increase to 16.25 cents from 12.5 cents and a new share buyback program it also announced Wednesday reflect continued growth in both its benefits and services businesses. Last May, UnitedHealth, the largest health insurer based on revenue, became the first big insurer to debut a quarterly dividend when it announced the 12.5-cent payment. Insurers have taken heavy criticism in recent years for reporting fat profits and still delivering steep premium hikes. Insurers attribute the premium hikes to the rising cost of care.