

The Cost of High Deductibles on Patient Care: Rather than addressing patient questions about the benefits of procedures, tests, drugs and specialist referrals, doctors are now beginning to field questions about the cost and inherent necessity of procedures.

Recent trends in healthcare coverage require patients to bear financial responsibility for more of their medical bills. That's because a growing number of health plans have high deductibles that can exceed \$5,000.00, high coinsurance rates, and limited or no coverage when patients seek care outside the plans' narrow provider networks.

Patients are becoming increasingly vocal about their out-of-pocket medical costs, which is one of the policymakers' goal of making healthcare consumers more cost-conscious and potentially slowing the nation's medical spending growth. This increased scrutiny, however, has a potential chilling effect on patient care. Doctors warn that too much cost sensitivity among patients can compromise their ability to provide the appropriate medical care, with potential harmful consequences if patients delay or skip necessary treatment for purely financial reasons.

CMS Reactivates Open Payments Website Registration: The CMS announced last week that its Open Payments website registration for physicians is back up after it had temporarily taken down registration the previous week after finding errors in its data. Currently, the website is intended to allow physicians to check payments data attributed to them and contest any perceived erroneous data.

Doctors complained that the registration process was overly onerous, as the CMS has apparently reused a registration tool from HealthCare.gov despite the tool's apparent failure there. The agency since has reportedly scrapped the tool. The website also was apparently not user-friendly once registered, with error messages and counterintuitive methods for challenging payments data.

The agency has said the registration-and-dispute period will be adjusted by one day for each day the website was suspended. That means providers will now have an additional week to register and review this year's tranche of data, with a 15-day correction period following that. That would push the new registration deadline to September 3, 2014.

Notwithstanding the recent deactivation, the CMS is still on schedule to release data concerning medical device and pharmaceutical manufacturer payments to doctors available to the public September 30, 2014.

Low-Income NJ Residents More Likely to Seek Healthcare at Hospitals: Low-income New Jersey residents are more likely to make hospital trips that could be avoided, according to a new report by The Rutgers Center for State Health Policy. The report may have important implications for organizations aiming to improve coordination and increase accountability for healthcare in low-income communities.

Associate research professor Derek DeLia, who co-wrote the Rutgers report with Kristen Lloyd, said some communities had hospitalization rates that were almost exactly what the analysis predicted. This was especially true of Camden, which has the highest rate of avoidable hospitalizations in the state. The report suggests that the best way to reduce high hospitalization rates in low-income communities is to address such factors as job training, better housing and more accessible transportation. The study concludes that although measures aimed at connecting residents with opportunities to improve their lives "are not traditionally medical," they have a big effect on medical uses and medical spending.

For more information on the above items, contact Kern Augustine Conroy & Schoppmann, P.C. at 1-800-445-0954 or via email at info@DrLaw.com.



*Experience and Vigilance make a difference.
Log on to ThePAP.com for more details
or email us at info@ThePAP.com*

Or Scan the QR Code with your Smartphone!



To Stay Updated Daily: Search for "KERN AUGUSTINE CONROY & SCHOPPMANN, P.C." on



info@DrLaw.com • DrLaw.com • 800-445-0954

Please feel free to share this publication. If you wish to unsubscribe, you may forward your request to info@DrLaw.com.