



November 30, 2009 - Topic: Consumer Information

## More Consumers Turn to Internet To Compare Health Care Prices

The increasing number of uninsured residents, the rise in high-deductible health insurance plans and large increases in copayments are leading more consumers to compare medical prices online, the *New York Times* reports.

### Insurer-Based Resources

Many health plans have begun posting health provider price information on their Web sites for members.

The online health plan tools let consumers compare prices among network physicians and find the price of diagnostic tests and other treatments.

### Independent Web Sites

Several companies have launched Web sites aimed at providing consumers with better medical price information.

PriceDoc.com lets consumers enter their ZIP codes to find health care providers in their area who have posted their prices online. In addition, consumers can enter a price they are willing to pay for a medical service, and health providers will respond if they are willing to accept that price.

HealthcareBlueBook.com collects prices paid for specific treatments and procedures in areas throughout the country and then identifies what it determines to be a range of fair prices.

OutOfPocket.com uses price information that consumers provide to determine a going rate for specific health care services throughout the U.S.

### Online State Data

Meanwhile, at least 33 states require hospitals to publicly disclose their prices.

However, most of the state sites listed the most expensive, non-discounted prices. In addition, most of the Web sites do not include bundled costs meaning that the sites might list the price of a general surgery but not include the surgeon's or anesthesiologist's fees (Konrad, *New York Times*, 11/28).

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