

Are patients tired of spending too much for health care?



The conversation around health care and what we pay for it is beginning to change. The realization that we pay way more than other countries for the same services is beginning to sink in.

Why do Americans on average pay \$8,143 for hospital and physician services for cataract surgery while the Swiss pay \$2,566 and the French only \$1,938? By all accounts, outcomes are similar.

For too long Americans have accepted these high price tags for medical care without asking questions. Politicians have justified them saying American quality is better. But studies by many organizations have shown that justification doesn't necessarily hold up, and in the last year or so I've detected a pushback from the public.

Last spring came the exposé of hospital and pharmaceutical prices in Time magazine by journalist entrepreneur Steven Brill. One piece I wrote about Brill's 36-page story got more than 13,000 hits on one website that reprinted my post. Brill told me that was indicative of interest from the public he received. People want to know why medical care costs so much.

At the end of last year, a 20-year-old Californian named Nick Gonzales had his appendix removed at Sutter General Hospital in Sacramento, Calif. The bill for a 24-hour stay: \$55,029.31. His family's insurance policy covered a good chunk of it, but he still was left with \$11,119 to pay out of pocket.

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Holyoke Enterprise February 20, 2014

Thinking About Health

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