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Consumers Spending More on Out-of-Pocket Costs

According to a new report from the Health Care Cost Institute, the growth rate of healthcare spending continues to remain low, but consumers may not be getting much of a relief. According to the report, health spending by privately-insured patients increased 4% last year, continuing a three-year trend of lower health spending growth. But consumers are spending more on out-of-pocket costs and women and young adults are now carrying a bigger burden. The study analyzed data from 156 million U.S. residents younger than age 65 who have employer-sponsored health coverage, focusing on medical bills submitted to Aetna, Humana and United Healthcare from 2009 to 2012. Some key highlights include:

- Healthcare spending averaged \$4,701 per person with employer-sponsored coverage in 2012, up \$181 from the year before.
- Almost half (45%) of the additional dollars were due to more spending on outpatient care;
- Out-of-pocket spending rose more quickly than expenditures per person in 2012, increasing 4% to \$768 for each individual;
- While price increases drove overall spending increases in years prior, utilization changes in 2012 impacted spending on prescription drugs and professional procedures, with more patients searching for low-cost care alternatives;
- Overall spending grew fastest for young adults, women and people living in the Northwest;
- Women's out-of-pocket costs were more than \$200 greater than men's out-of-pocket costs, \$883 per capita for women compared to \$647 for men. Those costs have also increased more quickly than for men;
- Healthcare spending rose faster—5.4% —for young adults (ages 19-25) than any other age group. By contrast, the oldest adults (ages 55-64) experienced the slowest healthcare spending growth—2.5%. Young adults continued to have some of the lowest expenditures (\$2,548 per person) while the oldest adults had the highest (\$8,920 per person);
- Nearly half (43%) of all out-of-pocket dollars were spent on professional procedures, such as doctor visits and lab tests. More than a quarter (26%) of consumer dollars were spent on outpatient services, the report found;
- For the third year, spending grew fastest for outpatient care compared to the other service categories, rising 6.5% to \$1,315 per person in 2012. Prices also rose fastest for outpatient care, increasing 5.6%. The price of an outpatient visit to an emergency room, for example, averaged \$2,457, and the price for other outpatient services (e.g. diagnostic imaging) averaged \$192.

Click [here](#) for the full report from the Health Care Cost Institute.

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