AN AMERICAN SICKNESS

HOW HEALTHCARE BECAME
BIG BUSINESS AND
HOW YOU CAN TAKE IT BACK

ELISABETH ROSENTHAL
ECONOMIC RULES OF THE DYSFUNCTIONAL MEDICAL MARKET

1. More treatment is always better. Default to the most expensive option.
2. A lifetime of treatment is preferable to a cure.
3. Amenities and marketing matter more than good care.
4. As technologies age, prices can rise rather than fall.
5. There is no free choice. Patients are stuck. And they're stuck buying American.
6. More competitors vying for business doesn't mean better prices; it can drive prices up, not down.
7. Economies of scale don't translate to lower prices. With their market power, big providers can simply demand more.
8. There is no such thing as a fixed price for a procedure or test. And the uninsured pay the highest prices of all.
9. There are no standards for billing. There's money to be made in billing for anything and everything.
10. Prices will rise to whatever the market will bear.
An insurer pay $110,000 per infusion
Then
Now
Is this a hospital or a hotel quiz
Fellowship Pledge

Recognizing that the American College of Surgeons seeks to exemplify and develop the highest traditions of our ancient profession, I hereby pledge myself, as a condition of Fellowship in the College, to live in strict accordance with its principles and regulations.

I pledge myself to pursue the practice of surgery with honesty and to place the welfare and the rights of my patient above all else. I promise to deal with each patient as I would wish to be dealt with if I were in the patient’s position, and I will set my fees commensurate with the services rendered. I will take no part in any arrangement, such as fee splitting or diminution surgery, which induces referral or treatment for reason other than the patient’s best welfare.

Upon my honor, I declare that I will advance my knowledge and skills, will respect my colleagues, and will seek their counsel when in doubt about my own abilities. In turn, I will willingly help my colleagues when requested.

Finally, I solemnly pledge myself to cooperate in advancing and extending the art and science of surgery by my Fellowship in the American College of Surgeons.
Upgrades – Femtosecond Laser
Cost $500,000. At the 2011 International Conference on Femtosecond Lasers in Ophthalmology physician presented a “hypothetical break even scenario.”
New Drug

DUEXIS

Generic Name: ibuprofen and famotidine tablets
“What is the most important information I should know about DUEXIS?” – Horizon Pharmaceuticals

• Duexis is a combination of ibuprofen (800 mg) and famotidine (26.6 mg)

• Both are off-patent and can be bought OTC

• Ibuprofen 200 mg tablets = 1000 tablets for $13.99
• Famotidine 20 mg tablets = 50 for $9.85

• One month supply of Ibuprofen (800 mg) = $5
• One month supply of Famotidine (20mg) = $6
• Duexis (with free coupon) for one month:
  • $2319
Ambulances, ER Docs, Even Neonatologists – Private Equity/Out of Network

Since the 2008 financial crisis, private equity firms have increasingly taken over public services like emergency care and firefighting, often with dire effects.

When You Dial 911 and Wall Street Answers

By DANIELLE IVORY, BEN PROTESS and KITTY BENNETT  JUNE 25, 2016
Today Business Considerations Govern Much of Our Health Care. Patients Need Protection
‘UVA has ruined us’: Health system sues thousands of patients, seizing paychecks and putting liens on homes
BILL OF THE MONTH: 18,000 Urine Test
$500,000+ for 13 weeks of dialysis
$28,000 Throat Swab

BILL OF THE MONTH
For Her Head Cold, Insurer Coughed Up $25,865
What Can Be Done?
LOTS!
Everyone Has Power
To Do Much More
Increasing Patient-Client Activism: If You See Something Say Something

Antoinette Newell of Schenectady, N.Y., and Dr. Barry Lindenberg have seen a sudden rise in the cost of digoxin for her heart. Stewart Cairns for The New York Times
Patient Education: At the Doctor’s Office

• If you need a blood test or radiology scan, ask which are a good deal. Press your doctors for high value radiology centers.

• Have you blood and other tests sent in your network. Avoid hospital labs. Jerry Solomon’s Vit D tests: $17 versus $774.
Patient Education: At The Hospital

How to Save Money at the Hospital
Going to the hospital can be scary—but medical bills can be even scarier. To avoid unnecessary expenses, here are 5 actions you can take during your hospital stay.
Patients: Avoid Financial Surprises in Hospital

• When checking in: Don’t sign the form that says you’ll pay for whatever your insurance doesn’t cover. Add “so long as it’s in my insurance network.”

• When told you’re going to stay over: Ask about admission versus “observation status.” Jim Silver’s $2300 story.

• When in the bed: Beware of drive-by doctoring.

• Say no to equipment
Bundling or Contracting Prevents Abuses
A New Patient Bill of Rights

• No referral to Collections, while bills are under dispute. Limits on seizures and liens.

• Insist on accurate provider directories

• Emergency Services – Should be no implied consent. Ground and air ambulances Now all out-of-network in many regions. Big problem with rural hospitals closing.
Informed Financial Consent

Accurate estimates of cost for patients. This happens in France and Australia. Extremely useful for most of medicine, which is elective.

No Surprise Bills Even Generated – Do Better than Current Laws

A standardized medical bill in English that patients can read and assess for accuracy.
Transparency: A Great Start, Not A Solution

Chargemasters in Patient Friendly Format

Prices of Tests and Drugs on Order Sheets

Accurate Provider Directories

Clear Benefits, No Gaming Allowed
Redefining “Anti-Competitive Behavior” for Healthcare

*Did Your Doctor Disappear Without a Word? A Noncompete Clause Could Be the Reason*
Do Hospitals Deserve Non-Profit Status?
Luxury v. Care. A No Frills Hospital.
Drug Prices. Need Political Action...at State or Federal Level.

• Laws Against Prescription Drug Price Rises: Ohio, Utah, Maryland, California and Counting...

Cities, counties and schools sidestep FDA foreign drug crackdown, saving millions
2020: How To Make Sure Patients Don’t Suffer From Profiteering and Business Disputes?

Medicare for All
Public Option
Enhancing ACA
Doing Away With ACA

Not mentioned: A National Fee Schedule or Fee Ceiling. (Other countries do this. Health as a utility.)