

Study: Hospitals are ripping off people

By Nina Liss-Schultz, Mother Jones

The United States has long been known to have one of the most expensive hospital systems in the world, and now a study indicates that hospitals are overcharging patients for medical services.

According to the study published Monday by National Nurses United, the largest nurses' organization in the United States, the price of many services has skyrocketed since the mid-'90s. Many hospitals have set charges at 10 times their cost. The 100 most expensive hospitals in the country, for example, in 2011 charged 765 percent of their costs, or \$765 for every \$100 of total costs.

Charles Idelson, a spokesman for NNU, says that even insured patients, whose insurance providers will offset some of the costs, will be affected by the price hikes. "The skyrocketing prices make premiums, co-pays and deductibles go up," Idelson says. Another recent study, by the Commonwealth Fund, found that "high deductibles and cost-sharing, along with no limits on out-of-pocket costs" may explain why even insured people struggle to afford health care.

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