

Affordable Care Acts cuts down on ER visits

By Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

Fewer uninsured Californians are seeking treatment in the state's emergency rooms, a decline that experts say is a direct result of the federal Affordable Care Act.

The trend represents welcome news for previously uninsured patients who had trouble affording a trip to the emergency room. But it has not brought down ER treatment costs for everyone else, health care experts said, nor has it slowed a years-long increase in overall emergency room traffic.

The Affordable Care Act required most Californians to obtain health insurance by April 15, 2014, or face a penalty. The new figures, reported by hospitals to the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development, show that about 337,000 uninsured patients visited California emergency rooms between April and June, down by 90,000, or 20 percent, from the same quarter in 2013. Put another way, 12 percent of emergency room patients lacked insurance this year, down from 16 percent in 2013.

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