

Health care costs becoming more transparent

By Jason Millman, Washington Post

The obscure, seemingly random universe of health-care pricing is getting a little less opaque today. Some of the country's largest health insurers are coming together to reveal the prices they pay for dozens of medical services across the country in an effort to help consumers become savvier shoppers.

All the information can be found at Guroo.com, a site launched Wednesday morning that was built by a health-care nonprofit group with information from United Healthcare, Humana, Aetna and Assurant Health. The transparency effort is a nod to the growing trend of patients being asked to pay more out of their own pockets, as insurers try to manage their costs and steer customers toward preferred health-care providers.

"The rise in health-care spending underscores the need to make it more transparent and help consumers make more informed decisions regarding their care," said David Newman, executive director of the Health Care Cost Institute, which built the Web site.

Guroo's initial rollout will let patients compare costs for more than 70 common services, which includes things as simple as a doctor's visit, or something more complex like a knee surgery. These are prices for health-care services that patients may shop for ahead of time, as opposed to the cost of emergency room care.

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