



Half of CT hospitals not compliant with new requirement to post negotiated prices for care

February 2, 2020

Despite a new federal rule, fourteen of 27 Connecticut hospitals do not publicly post the prices paid by insurers for medical care. Among those that do, compliance with plain-language, consumer-friendly formats, and machine-readable file requirements is mixed.

As of January 1st, all US hospitals are required to prominently display on a publicly available website prices privately negotiated with payers for 300 services, under [CMS's Hospital Price Transparency Rule](#). Hospital "charges" have been available to patients but not the actual prices paid by insurers. CMS requires both a "display of shoppable services in a consumer-friendly format" and a "comprehensive machine-readable file with all items and services."

Checking this week, negotiated price information is not available on fourteen of 27 Connecticut hospital websites. The quality of the information on the other sites varies considerably. Many are not available in a "consumer-friendly" format, in plain language, or in a machine-readable file, a required. One hospital requires patients to provide personal and insurance information to get price estimates. Only three advise patients about the costs of commonly associated services such as anesthesia or room/board charges.

The new regulation was developed to lower healthcare costs and avoid surprise billing by helping patients shop for care before they need it. However, the [evidence](#) is [mixed](#) on the impact of price lists and cost estimators in changing consumer behavior or in lowering costs. In some cases, they can raise costs if lower-cost competitors raise prices in response. In a consolidated market, like Connecticut's, opportunities to shop for care are limited.

The American Hospital Association [fought the regulation in court](#) but was unsuccessful. CMS is now [auditing hospital websites](#) for compliance. Penalties for noncompliance are up to \$300/day.

Connecticut hospital price transparency

As of February 2, 2021

Health System/Hospital	Negotiated prices on site?	Consumer-friendly format?	Machine-readable file?	Includes associated services?	Plain language descriptions?	Require insurance information to get prices?
Hartford HealthCare						
Hartford Hospital	No, only charges	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Backus						
Charlotte-Hungerford						
Hospital of Central CT						
Midstate						
St. Vincent's						
Windham						
Yale-New Haven Health						
Bridgeport	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Yale-New Haven						
Greenwich						
Lawrence & Memorial						
Trinity Health						
Johnson Memorial	No	No, have to request an estimate by phone or email	No, not by payer	No	No	Unclear – estimates only by request
St. Francis						
St. Mary's						

Health System/Hospital	Negotiated prices on site?	Consumer-friendly format?	Machine-readable file?	Includes associated services?	Plain language descriptions?	Require insurance information to get prices?
Prospect Medical Holdings						
Manchester Memorial	Yes	Sort of	No	No	No	No
Waterbury						
Rockville						
Nuvance						
Danbury	Yes	Yes, but massive pdf	No, doesn't work	Yes	No	No
Norwalk	Yes		Yes, but not 300 services			
Sharon						
Independent hospitals						
Bristol	Yes	Sort of	No	No	No	No
Day Kimball	Maybe, it never loaded over several days	Sort of	No	Maybe, it never loaded	No	Yes
Griffin	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Middlesex	Yes	No	No, no prices by payer	No	Yes	No
CT Children's	No, say it's coming soon	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Stamford	No	N/A	No, doesn't work	N/A	N/A	N/A
UConn Dempsey	Yes	Yes, very	Yes, easy to use	No	Yes, very	No

Methodology:

Connecticut acute-care hospital websites were visited between 1/29 and 2/2/2021 searching for compliance with [CMS's Hospital Price Transparency Rule](#). As of January 1, 2021, all US hospitals are required to prominently display on a publicly available website prices negotiated with payers for 300 shoppable services. Shoppable services are services “that can be scheduled by a healthcare consumer in advance”, e.g., joint surgery, physical therapy. CMS requires both a “display of shoppable services in a consumer-friendly format” and a “comprehensive machine-readable file with all items and services.” It must include the gross charge (without

discounts), the discounted cash price (for self-pay patients), all payer-specific negotiated prices, and the maximum and minimum negotiated prices for each service. Services should be described by a plain-language description. It should include ancillary services commonly provided with the shoppable service, e.g., anesthesia, room and board charges. Connecticut hospital websites were assessed for compliance with the regulation.