Don't Drown in Medical Debt

Celebrating a Second Chance at Life Survivorship Symposium

April 29 – May 5, 2023

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Triage Cancer

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Cancer & Finances: Medical Debt

• About 4 in 10 individuals report having medical debt, roughly 100 million adults.
• About 1 in 5 individuals do not expect to pay off their medical debt

• Who has medical debt?
  • 44% of adults with health insurance
  • 62% of uninsured adults
  • 2x as common for adults under 30 and adults 65+
  • Black adults are 50% more likely than white adults
  • Hispanic adults are 35% more likely than white adults

Contributors to Financial Toxicity

• Health Insurance Status
  • Adequate coverage
  • Effective navigation of policies
  • Consumer Protections
  • Medical Bills

• Employment Changes
  • To work or not to work - accommodations
  • Disability Insurance

• Life Changes
  • Marriage/divorce, moving, graduating from school, etc.
Health Insurance

Remember to…

- Purchase an adequate plan
- Understand your plan’s details (e.g., deductible, co-pays, co-insurance, etc.)
- Use in-network providers when possible
- Use out-of-pocket maximum to your benefit

Health Insurance Terms

Cost to Have Health Insurance
- Premium – each month (fixed $ amount)

Costs When You Use Your Health Insurance
- Deductible – each year (fixed $ amount)
- Co-Payment – each time you get care (fixed $ amount)
- Co-Insurance or Cost-Share – each time you get care (%)
- Out-of-Pocket Maximum (fixed $ amount) = deductible + co-payments + co-insurance
Case Study: Dan

Dan’s Plan:  
- Deductible = $2,000
- Co-insurance = 80/20 plan
- OOP Max = $8,000

If Dan has a $102,000 hospital bill, what does he pay?

1. His deductible of $2,000
   \[ \text{\$102,000 - \$2,000} = \text{\$100,000 left} \]

2. His co-insurance amount of 20% 
   \[ 20\% \text{ of } \$100,000 = \$20,000 \]

But OOP max is $8,000. So, he would only pay the $2,000 deductible + $6,000 of the $20,000 co-insurance amount, for a total of $8,000.

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Health Insurance Terms: Billing

- Balance billing
  - Billing patients for difference between what the provider charges and the insurance company pays for an out-of-network service
  - A preferred provider (i.e., in-network) may not balance bill

- Surprise billing
  - AZ, CA, CO, CT, FL, GA, IL, ME, MD, MA, MS, NH, NJ, MN, NY, OR, RI, TX, VA, & WA also have comprehensive laws protecting patients
  - Several other states have partial protections – mostly for ER visits
  - [TriageCancer.org/StateLaws](http://TriageCancer.org/StateLaws)

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No Surprises Act

• New federal law; began 1/1/22
• Private insurance must treat surprise bills as if they are from in-network providers
• Applies to emergency medical services and non-emergency medical services
• Covers air ambulances; but not ground ambulances = loophole
• Out-of-network providers allowed to ask patients to waive NSA rights for non-emergency care. If patient refuses, provider can refuse care
• But, waiving rights not allowed for services such as anesthesiology, pathology, diagnostic services, or in situations where an out-of-network provider is the only option
• If uninsured or choosing not to use insurance, providers must give you a good faith estimate of cost of your care. If actual cost exceeds estimate by more than $400, can file a dispute with HHS
• No Surprises Help Desk (800-985-3059) or online (www.cms.gov/nosurprises/consumers)

Minimize Future Medical Bills

Know your options!
TriageCancer.org/HealthInsurance
CancerFinances.org
Triage Cancer Webinar Series- recordings available

"Yes, we have 'All You Need To Know About The Health Care Legislation' but it is part of a twelve volume set."
**When to Enroll?**

- Employer plans: Varies (often in the Fall)
- Medicaid applications accepted year round
- Medicare: Oct. 15 – Dec. 7*
- 2023 Marketplace Open Enrollment: Nov. 1, 2023 – Jan. 15, 2024*
  - Enroll by Dec. 15, 2023 for coverage that starts Jan. 1, 2024
  - Some states may have longer open enrollment periods (e.g., NY until Jan. 31)

*Plans are for a calendar year
### Total Annual Cost

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Monthly Premium</th>
<th>Deductible</th>
<th>Out-of-pocket Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bronze</td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td>$8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>$275</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platinum</td>
<td>$400</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
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### Do the Math!

Note: for in-network providers only

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<td>$2,000</td>
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Total possible costs for year = 12 months of premiums + OOP max

1. $200x12 = $2,400 + OOP = $8,000
   Total = $10,400

2. $275x12 = $3,300 + OOP = $6,000
   Total = $9,300

3. $400x12 = $4,800 + OOP = $2,000
   Total = $6,800
What are the differences between plans?

- Cost
  - Premiums, co-payments, deductibles, co-insurance, out-of-pocket maximums

- Network of providers and facilities
  - Check to make sure your providers and facilities (hospitals, labs, imaging centers, etc.) are covered by the plan you choose

- Prescription drug coverage
  - Which drugs are covered (i.e., formulary)?
  - Prior authorization or step therapy?
  - Are there separate out-of-pocket costs (e.g., co-payments, co-insurance, deductibles, out-of-pocket maximum)?

Picking a Health Insurance Plan

TriageCancer.org/video-pickingaplan

TriageCancer.org/Worksheet-HealthInsurance
Managing Medical Debt

Lowering Bills Before Care

- Communicate with your healthcare team about expected costs
  - How much is treatment going to cost/last?
  - Make sure all providers are in-network!
  - Can portion of bill be waived or written off?
- Hospital social worker/navigator
  - Ability to pay programs
  - Discount programs or financial assistance
  - Dollar For [https://dollarfor.org/](https://dollarfor.org/)
- Health insurance company for a case manager

Lowering Bills Before Care

- Negotiate with your providers before care
- Arrange independent lab work
- Shop around for tests
  - [www.healthcarebluebook.com](http://www.healthcarebluebook.com)
  - Community health centers may offer follow-up treatment at a lower cost
- Group follow-up appointments
- Cheaper/generic medications and treatments
  - Talk with your health care team
  - Make sure that you have weighed the benefits and risks of any alternate drugs
Managing Your Medical Bills

• From your insurance company:

We have received a claim | We are processing your claim | Explanation of Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Service</th>
<th>Date billed</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount Charged</th>
<th>Amount Allowed</th>
<th>Amount Paid by Health Plan</th>
<th>Balance Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>05/13/2021</td>
<td>05/13/2021</td>
<td>93310</td>
<td>Intravenous</td>
<td>$288.00</td>
<td>$56.00</td>
<td>$168.00</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/14/2021</td>
<td>05/14/2021</td>
<td>50159</td>
<td>Lab services</td>
<td>$58.00</td>
<td>$58.00</td>
<td>$58.00</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
</tr>
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<td>$58.00</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CLAIM TOTAL: $344.00
BalanceDue: $79.00

For benefit year starting 1/1/2021:
- $300 of $300 Annual Deductible Met to Date
- $421.00 of $1,000 Out of Pocket Maximum Used to Date
- $103.00 of $3,000 Family Out of Pocket Maximum Used to Date

You are responsible for $5

This is NOT a BIL.
Managing Your Medical Bills

• From your provider:
  • The bill

• Doesn’t always happen in this order!
  • Wait for the EOB before paying any bills
  • Keep track and communicate with providers

Dealing With Medical Bills

• Review bills for accuracy
  • Don’t be afraid to ask your provider to clarify codes!
  • Medical diagnosis codes: International Classification of Diseases (ICD) codes, www.who.int/standards/classifications/classification-of-diseases

• Review EOBs
  • Tips on how to read EOB: https://nhhealthcost.nh.gov/guide/question/how-do-i-read-explanation-benefits-eob

• Consider professional bill reviewer/medical claims org
  • Alliance of Claims Assistance Professionals (ACAP) www.claims.org

• Appeal any denials of coverage
Consumer Protections: Appeals

- **Denials of coverage** (aka "adverse benefit determination" (ABD))
  - Internal appeals
  - External appeals (individual and employer plans)
    - AKA: Independent or External Medical Review
    - Conducted by an independent medical review organization (IRMO) or independent review entity (IRE*)
    - State Health Insurance Agency
      - Triagecancer.org/StateResources

Hurdle: Staying Organized

- Keep track of:
  - Dates, times, and method of any contact (phone, email, etc.)
  - Names of people you talk to
  - Summaries of your conversations
  - Any documents you send or receive
  - Important dates

- Good time to delegate to family and friends

TriageCancer.org/AppealTrackingForm
Hurdle: Peer Review

- Beware of “peer review” external appeal

Hurdle: Knowledge
Health Insurance Appeals Resources

TriageCancer.org/HealthInsurance

- Quick Guide to Appeals for Employer-Sponsored & Individual Health Insurance
- Quick Guide to Access to Medical Records
- Health Insurance Appeals Tracking Form
- CancerFinances.org – Health Insurance Appeals Module
- Recorded Webinar: Health Insurance Appeals
- Animated Videos:
  - When an Insurance Company Says No

Negotiate!

- Contact providers if having trouble paying your bills
  - When:
    - Before unpaid bills sent to collections agencies
  - What:
    - Ask for more time
    - Check to see if they would be willing to:
      - Write off a portion of your bill;
      - Negotiate a payment plan; or
      - Accept a lower lump sum payment
    - Check to see if there is a charity care or financial assistance program available through the provider.
Important News from Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion

Effective 7/1/22

- Paid medical collection debt no longer included on credit reports
- Time period before unpaid medical collection debt appears on credit reports increased from six months to one year

Effective first half of 2023

- No longer include medical collection debt under (at least) $500 on credit reports

Financial Information: Staying Organized

- Create an organizational system
  - File folders, 3 Ring Binder, Electronic files, etc.
  - Prebuilt: Cancer 101 Planner ($25), Bagit ($25)
  - LIVESTRONG GuideBook ($31), CanPlan Cancer Planner ($45)

Webinars:
- Drowning in Documents
- Healthy Organizing
  [TriageCancer.org/past-webinars](http://TriageCancer.org/past-webinars)
New Resource
TriageCancer.org/Worksheet-BillTracker

This worksheet is an example only. To input your own information, click on the sheet to the left called "My Medical Bill Tracker." To use that worksheet, download a copy to your computer and complete the following steps:

**Step 1:** Fill out the information in the top 4 rows using information from your health insurance policy.

### Medical Bill Tracker

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan Name: BienStar Gold</th>
<th>Co-Insurance Amount</th>
<th>Out-of-Pocket Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
<td>$8,000.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deductible Amount</th>
<th>$1,000.00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Billed YTD</th>
<th>$1,800.00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paid Out-of-Pocket YTD</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Remaining to Meet Deductible</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Paid by Insurance YTD</td>
<td>$800.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Due</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Remaining to Reach Out-of-Pocket Maximum</td>
<td>$7,000.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Provider Name</th>
<th>Statement Number</th>
<th>Description of Services</th>
<th>Total Amount Billed</th>
<th>Amount Paid by Insurance</th>
<th>Amount Due</th>
<th>Method of Payment</th>
<th>Appeal Needed?</th>
<th>FA/AMA Status</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/1/2022</td>
<td>Dr. Sue</td>
<td>1234 Office Visit</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>Bank Account</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2/2022</td>
<td>Imaging Center</td>
<td>789 MRI</td>
<td>$1,500.00</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
<td>Credit Card</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Need to Submit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Keep Records Of…

- Medical bills from all healthcare providers:
  - Hospital admissions, clinic visits, lab work, diagnostic tests, procedures, treatments
  - Drugs given & prescriptions ordered
  - Claims filed
- Payments from insurance companies and explanations of benefits
- Any pre-authorizations
- Dates, names, and outcomes of any correspondence with insurance companies or providers
- Non-reimbursed or outstanding medical and related costs
- Meals, lodging and travel expenses (including gas and parking)
- Your medical records

*Some of these may be tax-deductible!

Taxes

- Tax Day (2023) – Tuesday, April 18th (e-file or mail in tax forms)
- How to prepare
  - DIY, Software, Tax prep services, Accountants, Tax Lawyers
- Free help
  - Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE)
  - AARP Foundation Tax-Aide [https://www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp_taxaide/](https://www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp_taxaide/)
  - Taxpayer Advocate Service
Get Help Creating a Budget

- Contact consumer credit counseling agency
  - National Foundation for Credit Counseling: www.NFCC.org
- Talk with a financial planner
  - Financial Planning Association: www.fpanet.org

"We're on a shoestring budget, so I'd like us all to wear loafers instead."

Be aware:
- some solutions may negatively affect your credit

Financial Assistance Options

Module: Financial Assistance Options

- Local, state, county, & community organizations
- Cancer organizations
  - BMTInfoNet
  - Bone Marrow & Cancer Foundation
  - Cancer Support Community Help Line
  - CancerCare
- Private programs
  - Patient Services, Inc.
  - Healthwell Foundation
Financial Assistance Options: Rx Drugs

Module: Managing Prescription Drug Costs

- Pharmaceutical & Specialty Pharmacy assistance programs
  - Prior authorization & benefits resources
  - Sample billing and coding information
  - Resources for denials and appeals
  - Referrals to appropriate patient assistance options
    - Co-pay assistance
      - Ex: For commercially insured patients may pay $0 for oral products
    - Free drugs
      - Ex: for Medicare patients free medication, Medicare Extra Help, other foundations
      - Ex: for uninsured patients help finding coverage, 90 day-1 year supply
    - Free Trial Vouchers
    - Connection to help with transportation, lodging, etc.
Triage Cancer Drug Discount Card

- In partnership with NeedyMeds
- Free drug discount card offers a discount of up to 80% at more than 65,000 pharmacies nationwide
- Use instead of insurance coverage to lower out-of-pocket costs
- Anyone can use the card, regardless of income or insurance status
- Registration not required
- Card can be used to save on prescription drugs, over-the-counter drugs, and medical supplies written on a prescription form

TriageCancer.org/DrugDiscount

Temporary Assistance For Needy Families

- TANF
  - Federal grants to states to help low-income families with children achieve economic self-sufficiency
  - Time-limited cash assistance for those eligible
  - Other services like job training
  - Find programs in your state: www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/map/about/help-families

- Note: if you qualify for another type of government benefit, you may qualify for others. For example:
  - If you get SSI, you may also get Medicaid
  - If you get SNAP, you may also get TANF
Food Assistance

- If you're hungry now:
  - USDA National Hunger Hotline (866-348-6479 or 877-842-6273 in Spanish). M-F, 7am-10pm EST
  - Contact local/religious organizations to find a local food bank or food pantry: [www.feedingamerica.org](http://www.feedingamerica.org)

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
  - Federal nutrition program (aka "food stamps")
    - [www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program)

- WIC Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children
  - Federal short-term program can help you get healthy food for yourself and your young children
    - [www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-how-apply](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-how-apply)

- Children
  - Healthy meals for your children at their school, childcare center, or after-school program
    - [www.usa.gov/food-help#item-213690](http://www.usa.gov/food-help#item-213690)

- Seniors
  - Two federally-sponsored programs aim to get nutritious foods to seniors with a low income
    - [www.usa.gov/food-help#item-213706](http://www.usa.gov/food-help#item-213706)

Rental Assistance

- Privately owned apartments with reduced rents: [https://resources.hud.gov](https://resources.hud.gov)
  - Apply: contact the apartment management office

- Apply for a spot in Public Housing for an affordable apartment for low-income families, seniors, and people with disabilities
  - Apply: contact public housing agency - [www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha/contacts](http://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha/contacts)

- Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8) to pay for all or part of rent:
  - [www.hud.gov/topics/housing_choice_voucher_program_section_8](http://www.hud.gov/topics/housing_choice_voucher_program_section_8)
  - Apply: contact public housing agency - [www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha/contacts](http://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha/contacts)

- Need Help? Contact a HUD counseling agency at 800-569-4287 or
  - [https://apps.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/hcc/hcs.cfm](https://apps.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/hcc/hcs.cfm)
    - [www.hud.gov/topics/rental_assistance](http://www.hud.gov/topics/rental_assistance)
Utilities Assistance

• LIHEAP
  • Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program
  • Assistance for home heating & electricity for low-income households
  • www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/low-income-home-energy-assistance-program-liheap

• LIHWAP
  • Low Income Household Water Assistance Program
  • New program to assist low-income families with water and wastewater bills
  • Grants to states, territories, tribes - find your local program:
    • www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/map/lihwap-map-state-and-territory-contact-listing

Phone & Internet Assistance

• Lifeline Program
  • Discount on phone service for low-income households
  • Administered by Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC)
  • www.lifelinesupport.org

• Affordable Connectivity Program
  • Federal Communications Commission (FCC) offers broadband internet for low-income households
  • One-time discount to buy a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet
  • www.fcc.gov/ACP
Managing Medical Debt

Triage Cancer’s Free Resources

- TriageCancer.org
- Educational Events
  - Triage Cancer Conference: 5/20 & 10/14
  - Live & Recorded Webinars
- CancerFinances.org
- Quick Guides & Checklists
- Animated Videos
- State Resources & Chart of State Laws
- Legal & Financial Navigation Program

https://triagecancer.org/quick-guides/finding-financial-help
Legal & Financial Navigation Program

Free, one-on-one help for:
- Individuals diagnosed with cancer
- Caregivers
- Health care professionals

Health Insurance, Employment, Disability Insurance, Finances, Estate Planning, & More

Our Navigation services:
- Explain options
- Provide accurate information
- Empower you to take next steps

Start Online:
TriageCancer.org/GetHelp
For Spanish:
TriageCancer.org/ConsigueAyuda

Monica Fawzy Bryant, Esq.
Triage Cancer
LET US KNOW HOW WE CAN HELP YOU

Visit our website: bmtinfonet.org

Email us: help@bmtinfonet.org

Phone: 888-597-7674 or 847-433-3313

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Twitter, twitter.com/BMTInfoNet