

# JACKSONVILLE Business Journal

November 13, 2009

## Haggling healthcare bills?

Blog: The Daily Dose

Kimberly Morrison, Reporter

Haggling over your doctor bill? It sounds like an uncomfortable proposition, but some health advocacy groups say it just might work. A whopping 61 percent of patients who asked their doctors for a discount on their bill got one, according to Health Advocate.

The group just put out a guide, available online for free, that gives this and other tips on “healthcare survival.” It offers some good advice and resources for people new to navigating low-cost health-care, like tapping into a university dental clinic or comparison shopping, even checking eligibility for government aid. The Healthcare Survival Guide: Cost Saving Options For The Suddenly Unemployed And Anyone Else Who Wants To Save Money (long title, right?) is worth a quick read. And you should, because it will only be free for a limited time.

But if you’re already swamped in medical bills, there’s a guide for you, too. Families USA also published a free online guide. This one covers steps for paying medical bills, understanding rights, financial assistance and other good tips. Your Medical Bills: A Consumer’s Guide To Coping With Medical Debt is a great resource.

I have to say, I’ve always found it unfortunate that those who need the most help navigating the healthcare system are often the least capable of ferreting through available resources. But with 1.3 million Americans on track to lose jobless benefits by year’s end, there’s about to be a whole lot of people newly without insurance, and haven’t a clue of how they will pay for care, or if they will even get it. So I’m glad to see some help with situation.

And finally, if you are one of those people, I’ve got a tip for you myself: Ask. It’s a common theme in both guides, and something I always advise for people in a pickle of some sort. If being a reporter has taught me anything, it’s that you never know until you ask, and sometimes it’s surprising what people will tell you. This is true in healthcare, in debt and in life. Ask if you can work out a payment plan, if you might be eligible for low-income programs, where to go for help, what to do if you can’t pay. The worst thing that can happen is someone will say, “no.” And you can handle that, right?

[http://jacksonville.bizjournals.com/jacksonville/blog/daily\\_dose/2011/11/haggling\\_and\\_other\\_healthcare\\_survival\\_tips.html](http://jacksonville.bizjournals.com/jacksonville/blog/daily_dose/2011/11/haggling_and_other_healthcare_survival_tips.html)