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ART OF MEDICINE

If You Have to Ask How Much It Costs, You Probably Can't Afford It

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Abstract

In health care, the cost of surgical procedures and medications often come across as items listed at market price, which is indicated as “MP” on menus of many upscale restaurants.

Figure. Health Care Menu



Media

Digital painting.

Caption

In health care, trying to determine the cost of surgical procedures and medications often feels like ordering food listed at market price (MP) in an upscale restaurant. Listing an item as MP doesn't tell the patrons much at all. Now they are left with a decision of whether to order it, gambling they will be able to afford the meal, putting themselves in a vulnerable position and risking judgment of their social standing by inquiring about the price or skipping the item altogether. The same 3 options are true for patients trying

to figure out the cost of procedures and medications. The first option is to blindly agree to a procedure or medication in hopes it is affordable. Secondly, you can uncomfortably ask your physician the exact cost, knowing they might not have that information available and that if you need to ask, you probably can't afford it. Lastly, you could skip the necessary procedure or medication because you aren't sure you can afford it but do not want to put yourself in the embarrassing position of inquiring about cost. Pricing transparency in health care would give patients necessary insight into cost and help them make decisions based on relevant information.

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