



Dear Colleagues,

The Sunday edition of the *Baltimore Sun* carries an article focusing on how Maryland hospitals and the state's Health Services Cost Review Commission manage uncompensated care. The report, the first in a series, contains descriptions of individuals struggling to pay medical bills and questions collection processes for unpaid bills, as well as the HSCRC's rate setting policies and regulations.

Unfortunately, the newspaper's story fails to report all of the facts or to put the facts into proper perspective. We prepared appropriate responses to the Sun's editors about this, and if necessary, will respond to subsequent articles in the series. Details on our position can be found at [http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/medial/uncompensated\\_care\\_info/index.html](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/medial/uncompensated_care_info/index.html).

Meanwhile, I want to reassure you that The Johns Hopkins Health System and its hospitals are extremely proud of the quality and compassion of our clinical care, charity care, financial assistance services, and responsible and ethical debt collection policies. Sometimes administrative errors are made, as in the newspaper's front-page example. In these relatively few instances, we apologize and rectify the situation.

Over the years, Johns Hopkins has committed substantial resources to helping patients arrange for coverage or pay their bills if they do not have insurance or other means to pay. We spend millions each year to provide financial counselors who work directly with patients to ascertain if they qualify for assistance.

When patients have the means to pay but fail to do so after repeated notifications by the hospital, the unpaid bills may be referred to an outside collection agency. We hold these collection agencies and any other organization representing our health system to the highest standards. And in those relatively rare instances where legal action is sought, we take that path only after months and sometimes a year of failed efforts to reach out and work with those who have the ability to pay, but do not do so. This collection process complies with all relevant federal and state laws and guidelines developed by the Maryland Hospital Association.

Our practices are fair, ethical and aligned with the expectations of the Health Services Cost Review Commission that we will collect unpaid bills from those who are able to pay. We, along with almost all Maryland hospitals, support the HSCRC and its 36-year track record in keeping Maryland's health care costs down and assuring access to our institutions. We do so because if the debts of those who can pay are not recovered by hospitals, all of these unpaid bills are spread around ultimately to those who do pay their bills, putting an unfair burden on everyone with higher rates and costs.

We, as noted above, along with the Maryland Hospital Association and others have communicated our concerns about the article to the newspaper and will continue to address them. We are always open to the possibilities of strengthening our processes and are committed to working on any needed improvements to standards and policies.

You should continue to take enormous pride in the compassionate care and support Johns Hopkins provides every day to our patients regardless of their ability to pay. My thanks to each of you for all that you do for our patients.

Sincerely,

Ronald R. Peterson  
President  
The Johns Hopkins Hospital and Health System

Read more at [http://www.insidehopkinsmedicine.org/uncompensated\\_care\\_info/](http://www.insidehopkinsmedicine.org/uncompensated_care_info/)