

As You See It, March 4, 2011

Patients not overcharged

Thanks for your recent summary of inequities in provider reimbursement for local Medicare physicians. Not only are local Medicare providers underpaid compared with providers only 20 miles away, but this and high cost of local housing discourage qualified providers from relocating to this area. However, there is a significant inaccuracy in the article. Medicare patients are not, as a consequence of lower provider reimbursement, being overcharged for local services. In fact, the amount the Medicare patient or their coinsurer must pay is limited to 20 percent of the lower Medicare-approved amount. If local reimbursement increases, patients or coinsurers will then be responsible for 20 percent of this higher amount, effectively a slight increase.

Dr. Jan Jurnecka, Aptos