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Koehler Fitzgerald

Koehler Fitzgerald LLC provides highly specialized legal services for self-insured health plans, their members and sponsors, insurers, TPAs, and reference-based pricing plans.

The firm's services encompass defense of out-of-network claims, claim repricing and scrubbing, and the national defense of patients confronted with balance billing claims. Additionally, the firm can represent plans and insurers nationally in the recovery of claim overpayments.

Koehler Fitzgerald's services cover all stages of collection activity, from advocacy to provider billing to jury trial and appeal.

Koehler Fitzgerald's services are supported by the use of proprietary and customized software to track and support all of its tasks and provide customized weekly reports of the status of claims and activity.

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Price Transparency

"Thanks to [a] new US law, we now know the standard price for a cotton ball at the New York Presbyterian Hospital is \$1.15. The list price for a skull X-ray at Orlando Health is \$695 and NYU Langone's average charge for a heart transplant is \$1,698,831.13." So commences the Quartz study authored by Anne Quito and Amanda Shendruk entitled, "US hospitals are now required by law to post prices online. Good luck finding them."

"Quartz surveyed the websites of 115 of the largest US hospitals, which together account for 20% of all Medicare and Medicaid funding to hospitals. After spending an inordinate amount of time clicking through pages, we eventually found the lists of 105 hospitals. ... Even among those hospitals that are technically compliant with the new rule, the vast majority don't make it especially easy for the average person to find their pricing information. We found that most price lists are buried under many sub-menus or at the very bottom of a long page scroll. Nearly 75% of hospital websites in our study required three or more clicks to find the information. ... But some lists require hundreds of clicks to find a





All in the Codes

Medical coding is the expression of healthcare diagnosis, procedures, medical services, and equipment into universal medical alphanumeric codes using various classification systems, such as ICD-9, CPT, DSM-IV and HCPCS. While a minimum of a high school diploma is needed to become a medical coder, many coders have postsecondary qualifications or an associate degree. The job requires some knowledge of medical terminology, anatomy, physiology and biology. Some certificate programs can be completed in less than a year and may be taken online. The average pay for a Medical Coder is \$17.52 per hour, approximately \$40,000 per year.

A January 15, 2019 story in Becker's Hospital CFO Report illustrates how medical billing is all in the codes. Reportedly a patient presented at a Ocala, Florida ER for a minor cut requiring four stitches. The charge: \$5,000. The patient was billed for a level three emergency, meaning care provided was a higher-level emergency that involved a specialist or substantial decisions. The patient challenged the bill as there had been no specialist, lab work or X-rays involved or administered. "Once a level 1 code was applied for a simple visit, the bills were lowered from \$5,000 to \$800." In part, the provider stated, "We understand healthcare bills can be confusing at times."

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particular item. Kentucky's Norton Hospital price index has 1,560 pages, with three separate pages dedicated to 'treatment rooms.' ... After locating the list, there's the matter of understanding it. To comply with the law, many hospitals published their entire chargemaster, a list that contains thousands of items—from a cotton ball to an organ transplant—written in terms and codes unintelligible to most consumers. ... The law calls for the data to be published in 'a machine readable format' that can be easily imported and aggregated. Reader-friendly PDFs, for instance are not compliant, but Excel spreadsheets and, even worse, markup languages like XML, are."

Emily Ryan, a Washington, DC-based user experience advocate says, "I've been following this, and I'm completely shocked. In some ways this is actually harmful to patients because you're now giving them false information. In this age of fake news, we have to be very careful as [user experience] and content stewards on what we put out there." She says that false expectations about pricing can even compromise a hospital's credibility. "Once we lose trust, it's very hard to get it back."

The CMS price-transparency law took effect on January 1, requiring all hospitals operating in the US "to make public a list of their standard charges via the Internet in a machine readable format...."



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