



September 22, 2006, Issue #210

## AHRQ News and Numbers

The nation's hospital bill totaled more than \$790 billion in 2004, according to a new report by HHS' Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. The bill represents the total amount charged for 39 million hospital stays that year. Federal and State governments were billed for nearly \$500 billion, or 60 percent, of the national hospital bill for Medicare and Medicaid patients. [Source: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, HCUP, *Statistical Brief #13: The National Hospital Bill: The Most Expensive Conditions, by Payer, 2004*, [statistical brief](#).]

### Today's Headlines:

1. [NQF and JCAHO announce the 2006 John M. Eisenberg Patient Safety and Quality Awards](#)
2. [New AHRQ MEPS statistical brief on health insurance status of children](#)
3. [New test measures Spanish-speaking patients' understanding of basic medical terminology](#)
4. [AHRQ health IT vacancy announcements posted](#)
5. [Highlights from our most recent monthly newsletter](#)
6. [AHRQ in the professional literature](#)

### **1. NQF and JCAHO Announce the 2006 John M. Eisenberg Patient Safety and Quality Awards**

The National Quality Forum and the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations have announced the 2006 recipients of the annual John M. Eisenberg Patient Safety and Quality Awards. The honorees, by award category, were for **Individual Achievement**: Donald Berwick, M.D., Institute for Healthcare Improvement, Boston, MA; **Research**: Jerry H. Gurwitz, M.D., University of Massachusetts Medical School, Boston, MA; **Innovation in Patient Safety and Quality at a National or Regional Level**: Minnesota Alliance for Patient Safety, St. Paul, MN; and Pennsylvania Patient Safety Authority, Huntingdon Valley, PA; and **Innovation in Patient Safety and Quality at the Local or Organizational Level**: Wichita Citywide Heart Care Collaborative, Wichita, KS.

[Back to Headlines](#)

### **2. New AHRQ MEPS Statistical Brief on Health Insurance Status of Children**

AHRQ issued a new statistical brief with 2005 data on health insurance status of noninstitutionalized children in United States. Estimates are presented for the first half of calendar years 1996 through 2005. The statistical brief, *Statistical Brief #141: Changes in Children's Health Insurance Status, 1996-2005: Estimates for the U. S. Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population under Age 18*, presents estimates from the Household Component of the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS-HC). Select to view the [data](#).

[Back to Headlines](#)

### **3. New Test Measures Spanish-Speaking Patients' Understanding of Basic Medical Terminology**

Researchers have developed an easy-to-use word-recognition test to assess Spanish speakers' comprehension of medical terms commonly used in clinics and community health programs. Low health literacy plays an important role in health disparities and may contribute to high health care cost, low quality of care, and even medical errors. The researchers evaluated the test—the Short Assessment of Health Literacy for Spanish-Speaking Adults or SAHLSA—on 201 Spanish-speaking clinic patients from various countries and found that it could reliably identify those with low health literacy. The test, which asks patients to identify words such as *embarazo* (pregnancy), *microbios* (germs), and *infección* (infection), found no major differences among the groups except that patients of South American origin scored higher. According to the study's leader, Shouu-Yih D. Lee, Ph.D., of the University of North Carolina School of Public Health, the new tool overcomes the problems encountered in translating word-recognition health literacy assessment into Spanish and can be used in clinics as well as in community health programs. The article, "Development of an Easy-to-Use Spanish Health Literacy Test," was published in the August issue of *Health Services Research*. Select to read the [abstract](#) in PubMed®.

[Back to Headlines](#)

### **4. AHRQ Health IT Vacancy Announcements Posted**

AHRQ has posted several vacancy announcements, including two positions in its health IT team. They are:

- Medical Officer (Director, Health Information Technology), Announcement number: HHS-AHRQ-2006-0096 Closing date: November 20

Select to read this [announcement](#).

- Staff Service Fellow (also for the health IT team), Announcement number: HHS-AHRQ-2006-0003 Closing date: October 10

Select to read this [announcement](#).

Select to find out about other AHRQ [vacancies](#) at USAJobs.

[Back to Headlines](#)

### **5. Highlights From Our Most Recent Monthly Newsletter**

Among the key articles in the online issue of *Research Activities*:

- Studies examine the practice of prescribing medications to outpatients that can dangerously interact with one another.

Many patient problems caused by medications or adverse drug events are due to dangerous interactions of coprescribed medications. A new study reveals that one-third of primary care patients are prescribed drugs that strengthen the blood-thinning effect of the anticoagulant warfarin. A second study shows that between 18 and 28 percent of primary care patients are prescribed a drug that can adversely interact with warfarin or three other commonly used drugs. Select to read this [article](#).

Other articles are:

- Elderly women are more likely than men to die after coronary bypass surgery.
- Twice as many minority children than white children with special health care needs do not receive needed vision care.
- Studies highlight the value of the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey to inform trends in care costs, coverage, use, and access.
- Modifying unhealthy habits in middle age may reduce the likelihood of nursing home admissions later in life.

Select to read these [articles](#) and more.

[Back to Headlines](#)

## **6. AHRQ in the Professional Literature**

*We are providing the following hyperlinks to journal abstracts through PubMed® for your convenience. Unfortunately, some of you may not be able to access the abstracts because of firewalls or specific settings on your individual computer systems. If you are having problems, you should ask your technical support staff for possible remedies.*

Linder JA, Chan JC, Bates DW. Appropriateness of antiviral prescribing for influenza in primary care: a retrospective analysis. *J Clin Pharm Ther* 2006 Jun; 31(3):245-52. Select to read the [abstract](#) in PubMed®.

Gupta D, Potthoff S, Blowers D, et al. Performance metrics for advanced access. *J Healthc Manage* 2006 Jul-Aug; 51(4):246-259. Select to read the [abstract](#) in PubMed®.

Hassett MJ, O'Malley AJ, Pakes JR, et al. Frequency and cost of chemotherapy-related serious adverse effects in a population sample of women with breast cancer. *J Natl Cancer Inst* 2006 Aug 16; 98(16):1108-1117. Select to read the [abstract](#) in PubMed®.

Localio AR, Berlin JA, Ten Have TR. Longitudinal and repeated cross-sectional cluster-randomization designs using missed effects regression for binary outcomes: bias and coverage of frequentist and Bayesian methods. *Stat Med* 2006 Aug 30; 25(16):2720-2736. Select to read the [abstract](#) in PubMed®.

Adams EK, Bronstein JM, Florence CS. Effects of primary care case management (PCCM) on Medicaid children in Alabama and Georgia: provider availability and race/ethnicity. *Med Care Res Rev* 2006 Feb; 63(1 Supp):73S-95S. Select to read the [abstract](#) in PubMed®.

[Back to Headlines](#)

## **Encourage Your Colleagues to Sign Up for This Electronic Newsletter**

Please forward this to others who might be interested in receiving this publication. To subscribe:

1. Send an E-mail message to: [listserv@list.ahrq.gov](mailto:listserv@list.ahrq.gov).
2. In the subject line type: Subscribe.
3. In the body of the message type: sub public\_list-L and your full name.
4. You will receive an E-mail confirmation.

If you would like to receive the e-newsletter in text-only format:

1. Send an E-mail message to: [listserv@list.ahrq.gov](mailto:listserv@list.ahrq.gov).

2. In the subject line type: Subscribe.
3. In the body of the message type: sub public\_list-text and your full name.
4. You will receive an E-mail confirmation.

If you are a new subscriber or would like to reference information in a previous issue, an archive of this newsletter can be found on AHRQ's Web site at <http://www.ahrq.gov/news/enewsix.htm>.

To unsubscribe:

1. Send an E-mail message to: [listserv@list.ahrq.gov](mailto:listserv@list.ahrq.gov).
2. In the subject line type: Signoff.
3. In the body of the message type: signoff public\_list-L
4. You will receive an E-mail confirmation.

**Contact Information:**

Please address comments and questions to Nancy Comfort at [Nancy.Comfort@ahrq.hhs.gov](mailto:Nancy.Comfort@ahrq.hhs.gov) or (301) 427-1866.