



For Immediate Release

Contacts:

Dr. Jeff Rice, Healthcarebluebook.com, 615-377-6653, jrice@healthcarebluebook.com

Aimee Stern, Stern Communications, 202-744-5004, aimee@sterncommdc.com

DC Area Consumers Must Stop Overpaying for Tests and Treatments

June 3, 2009. Washington, DC. Why is the cash price for an MRI of the cervical spine without contrast \$1056.00 at an imaging center in Rockville, MD and \$2710.00 14 miles away in Chevy Chase, MD. How can two facilities located just outside of Washington, DC vary so much in their pricing for the same test, in the same type of facility, using the same type of equipment? Why is the Healthcare Blue Book fair price of \$628.00 so much less than what these facilities are charging for the same service?

These are questions that Dr. Jeffrey Rice, CEO of Healthcarebluebook.com a new free pricing guide for consumers, is asking about healthcare pricing across the United States. The pricing data is calculated from the average price that health plans pay their providers in a market area. As legislators debate healthcare reform, Dr. Rice suggests they examine healthcare pricing in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. It's a good indicator of pricing disparities for healthcare tests and treatments throughout the nation.

Consumers who are uninsured, underinsured or have high deductible health plans must learn how to obtain a fair price for high quality care. If they pay cash, they should receive discounts of up to 50% for a test or treatment. People must learn to compare prices across multiple facilities before a test or procedure is done.

Here are some additional pricing disparities that Healthcare Blue Book researchers found in the DC metropolitan area:

- Routine Mammogram Screenings - Cash prices ranged from \$123.00 for a community based center, to \$441.00 at a local hospital. (HCBB price is \$117).
- MRI of the Right Knee Without Contrast - Cash prices among five imaging centers ranged from \$400-\$1504. (HCBB price is \$912.00).

Healthcarebluebook.com suggests that residents of the Washington, DC metropolitan area follow two simple steps to obtain fair prices for high quality healthcare. First look up the average price that health plans pay doctors for a service or treatment in their market on www.healthcarebluebook.com.

Second, using the Healthcare Blue Book fair price as a baseline, contact several facilities to determine what they charge for the service needed. These two simple steps – which can be done in less than 30 minutes - can potentially save consumers thousands of dollars.

“DC area consumers should demand healthcare pricing transparency at every level of the healthcare system,” says Dr. Rice. “Especially in this economy, consumers should learn what the fair price is for every healthcare service they need and use it to shop for and negotiate a reasonable price for care.”

The Health Care Blue Book also has an employer application so that companies can customize their provider network’s data making it easier for employees to determine what they should be paying in and out of network. Research has found that companies can save tens of thousands of dollars by helping their employees choose the higher quality, lower cost providers within their health plan networks.

About the Healthcare Blue Book

The [Healthcare Blue Book](http://www.healthcarebluebook.com) is a free consumer guide to fair pricing for healthcare treatments and services. It provides a fair price based on the typical amount preferred provider organizations (PPOs) pay to providers by market across the United States. Learn more at www.healthcarebluebook.com.