

# Del Norte County Healthcare District



## The Price of Healthcare

In an effort to educate patients on healthcare fees charged by hospitals, and to increase hospital pricing transparency, a federal ruling took effect in January requiring nearly all hospitals to make their fees public. Prior to the new rule, most hospitals, including "not for profit" hospitals, kept their prices hidden from public view.

This year, reporters from the Wall Street Journal analyzed the once secret pricing data, finding that Sutter Health has extreme ranges in patient fees. For example, for a cesarean section at a Sutter Health California Pacific Medical Center in San Francisco, the price might be \$6,241 however, it could also go to as high as \$29,257 or even up to \$60,584 - a ten fold difference in price for the same procedure

The Wall Street Journal analysis found a similar price disparity for orthopedic procedures:

*"For hip- and knee replacements, Medicaid and Medicare plans paid the lowest prices at the Modesto hospital, \$3,264 and \$16,349, respectively. The lowest price paid by a commercial insurer totaled \$51,895. The highest rate reached \$81,617, again for patients whose insurance didn't include the Modesto hospital in-network."*

The Wall Street Journal's Anna Wilde Matthews and co-authors added, *"Sutter's rates are generally high compared with other hospitals, according to prior research by the Rand Corp. think tank."* [Go here to see the full article.](#)

### **What can you do?**

Navigating the medical system can be daunting but there are ways you can advocate for yourself as a patient. Per the regulations under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), your healthcare and insurance providers are required to assist you in decisions related to your health and well-being. You have rights. If you disagree with a plan of care or a medical bill, or just have questions, you have options to resolve your concerns. [Go here to see our tips for appealing a medical bill.](#)

If you have ideas on how to improve local healthcare, please [contact us](#). Our meetings are open to the public (currently via Zoom) and our meeting schedule and agendas are posted on the Del Norte County website.

Sincerely,

Del Norte Healthcare District Board of Directors  
Kevin Caldwell, M.D., Elizabeth Austen, Michael Young, Tonya Pearcey, R.N.