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For Your Health's Sake

The Ripple Effect Of Non-Emergent ER Visits

(Huntsville, TX) – Ever wonder why emergency room waiting areas always seem filled with people waiting for hours to get care? One of the major reasons is that each year millions of Americans use emergency rooms for routine medical care. Last year, there were about 10 million visits to emergency rooms for non-emergency care. The average Emergency Room (ER) visit costs $383, while the average doctor's office visit is approximately $60.

Unnecessary ER visits can delay care for people with true emergencies, and cost all of us billions of dollars. The best care for non-urgent conditions is in a doctor's office. With a personal physician, you can build a relationship and develop medical treatments that respect your priorities. Knowing your family health history, your physician can also plan appropriate preventive measures. Not to mention, be available for follow-up care to make sure that your treatment is effective. Often, many of the nation's 41.2 million uninsured have few alternatives to using an Emergency Room for basic medical care. They are not the only people however using the ER for routine care. Those of us with insurance sometimes show up there, too, perhaps out of a sense of convenience or lack of knowledge. And because we all pay for the rising cost of health care through increased premiums, copayments and deductibles, we all have a stake in controlling health care costs.

Consider the ripple effect of non-emergent ER visits. If an ER trips cost on average more than 4.5 times that of a visit with a family doctor or minor care clinic; that means all insured individuals are forced to collectively absorb the sticker shock through higher premiums. When use of medical services goes up, so do costs. The world of health care as we know it continues to change. Consumers are being asked to take a more active role in cost management associated with the care they receive from doctors, hospitals and other providers.

You can do your part. Find a family physician that best suits your needs. Many offices offer extended hours and guarantee same day appointments. Huntsville Memorial Hospital is also proud to support the HMH Medical Clinic. This facility was established in 1992 to meet the primary health care needs of the residents of Walker County. It is an ambulatory acute care clinic that provides care for patients of all ages.

If you have an emergent condition you shouldn’t hesitate to go to the ER, but if your condition isn’t urgent, check with your doctor first. When you have an ongoing relationship with a primary care physician or minor care clinic, you can get more consistent care from a doctor who knows you, and you can also help keep health care affordable for everyone. When it comes to your health, you only want to be treated by the best. At HMH, you won't find anything less. We developed a team comprised of highly-trained specialists and medical experts to expand our capabilities and services to the community. We're also proud to report that 99% of our medical staff physicians are board-certified or board-eligible. To learn more about our talented medical staff, visit our website at www.huntsvillememorial.com. Happy Easter!

Sally Nelson
Chief Executive Officer
Huntsville Memorial Hospital