

Date: June 26, 2009

Good Shepherd Medical Center Launches Prompt Pay Discount Program to Help Uninsured

Good Shepherd Medical Center in Longview is now offering an innovative program to give uninsured and underinsured patients the same benefit of pricing discounts received by those with insurance. The Cash Payment Program seeks to offer patients without insurance the same reasonable pricing rates that are available to those who have insurance coverage. This new program offers patients a way to pay their health care bill without going heavily into debt for services such as emergency room visits, X-rays and joint replacement surgery. Anyone can choose to pay cash under the new program, which began this month.

This week, an uninsured patient on a fixed income had her gall bladder removed. Traditionally, hospital billed charges for this surgery would typically cost approximately \$20,000 and uninsured patients would be required to pay the full amount. This patient was able to take advantage of this new innovative program and receive the same benefits that insured patients receive and pay \$4,400 as payment in full.

Good Shepherd Medical Center President and CEO Edward Banos says with 18 percent of our patient population being uninsured, we can't afford not to look at financial solutions in this tough economic climate. With lawmakers in Washington debating and preparing to vote on this issue later this summer, our organization wants to be part of the solution because we are on the front lines of health care every day.

"Our mission continues to be to provide health care to all who need it. With the rising number of uninsured patients, the Cash Payment Program will help us carry out our mission while also be paid fairly for services without placing our patients into financial debt leading to possible personal bankruptcy," says Banos.

Also a Harvard Medical School study found that getting sick is a factor in more than 62 percent of bankruptcies. Also, bankruptcies linked to medical problems rose 50 percent between 2001 and 2007.

With this new program, Good Shepherd is making every effort to offer options to patients to keep their medical care from causing them extensive financial debt. If the bill

is less than \$1,000 dollars, the patient must pay half of the cash price when medical services are received. The other half must be paid within 30 days. For bills that exceed \$1,000, the patient agrees to pay the remainder within 90 days or the bill will revert to the full medical service charge. The program will eventually include cash prices on every medical procedure at Good Shepherd Medical Center.

“Since launching the program, we have received cash payments of more than \$20,000 for medical bills that under the old system, patients would have been required to pay approximately \$130,295. These bills would have caused a financial burden to most if not all of these uninsured patients,” says Allen Hold, Director of Patient Financial Services at Good Shepherd Medical Center.

Currently, cash prices are in place for a limited number of medical procedures. For example, under this program an MRI is offered for \$525 and a CT for \$400 when these procedures under traditional billed charges would be an estimated \$3,600 and \$2,400, respectively. In addition, the cash price for an outpatient visit to the Emergency Room is charged at \$500 or \$750 depending on the level of acuity. This new program reflects Good Shepherd Medical Center’s commitment to providing innovative solutions to health care billing and quality health care to all patients.

END