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## Public Perceptions of Costs for Health Care Products and Services Differ Widely

A recent Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Health-Care Poll asked respondents to estimate the costs of a variety of health-related services and products, ranging from a cholesterol-lowering drug to chemotherapy treatment, and from an ambulance trip to a month in a nursing home. For the most part, responses were all over the board, and there seems to be no consensus about costs of health care.

“As we move toward a world of ‘consumer directed health care,’ adults will be asked to make more decisions about how to spend their health care dollars. Making choices requires some basic knowledge about the costs associated with the various health-related products and services. These findings underscore the extent to which that level of knowledge is lacking among consumers,” says Katherine Binns, senior vice president at Harris Interactive.

“Health-care costs can be affected by factors such as who’s providing the services, regional variations, and even who is paying,” says Thomas D. Snook, an actuary at benefits-consulting firm Milliman USA.

The tables below include the average billed charges for products and services as calculated by Milliman, except for costs of the statin and blood-pressure medicines, which were obtained through the drug makers and online prescription-drug retailers.

**TABLE 1**

### Estimated Monthly Costs For Medications

“To the best of your knowledge, what is the normal cost for each of the following medical products/services? By cost we mean the total cost paid by the patient and others (including insurance companies), not just the out-of-pocket costs.”

- A month’s supply of a leading brand name statin (a cholesterol lowering drug)
- A month’s supply of a leading brand name drug to treat high blood pressure

Base: All Adults

	Statins	High Blood Pressure Medication
	%	%
\$1 - \$50	18	21
\$51 - \$100	33	34
\$101 - \$200	29	25
\$201 - \$300	10	10
More than \$300	11	11
<b>Estimated Average</b>	<b>\$156</b>	<b>\$153</b>
<b>Average Actual Cost</b>	<b>\$109*</b>	<b>\$ 93*</b>

Note: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

\*Average cost for Pfizer’s Lipitor and Tenormin, a beta-blocker made by AstraZeneca.

# Health Care Poll

**TABLE 2**

**Estimated Costs For Medical Tests**

“To the best of your knowledge, what is the normal cost for each of the following medical products/services? By cost we mean the total cost paid by the patient and others (including insurance companies), not just the out-of-pocket costs.”

- A typical blood chemistry test for cholesterol, blood sugar, or anemia
- An EKG to check on the heart

Base: All Adults

	<b>EKG</b>	<b>Blood Chemistry Test</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
\$1 - \$50	9	25
\$51 - \$100	13	31
\$101 - \$200	20	25
\$201 - \$300	17	11
\$301 or more	N/A	8
\$301 - \$500	17	N/A
\$501 - \$1,000	14	N/A
\$1,001 or more	9	N/A
<b>Estimated Average</b>	<b>\$463</b>	<b>\$143</b>
<b>Average Actual Cost</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>\$300</b>

Note: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

**TABLE 3**

**Estimated Costs For Surgical Procedures And Chemotherapy**

“To the best of your knowledge, what is the normal cost for each of the following medical products/services? By cost we mean the total cost paid by the patient and others (including insurance companies), not just the out-of-pocket costs.”

- A hip replacement operation (not including medical costs such as physician fees, lab tests and medications)?
- A course of chemotherapy treatment for a patient with breast cancer
- A trip to the hospital to give birth with a Caesarian section *[Note: A previous version of this newsletter included a typographical error that listed the average cost of a Caesarian section at \$1,350. That should have been \$13,500 as shown in the chart below.]*

Base: All Adults

	<b>Hip Replacement</b>	<b>Birth via C-Section</b>	<b>Chemotherapy for Breast Cancer</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
\$1 - \$500	4	10	19
\$501 - \$1,000	9	6	13
\$1,001 - \$2,500	10	16	15
\$2,501 - \$5,000	25	31	18
\$5,001 - \$10,000	24	22	15
\$10,001 - \$20,000	15	10	9
\$20,001 or more	14	4	11
<b>Estimated Average</b>	<b>\$10,639</b>	<b>\$6,145</b>	<b>\$8,796</b>
<b>Average Actual Cost</b>	<b>\$25,000*</b>	<b>\$13,500**</b>	<b>N/A</b>

Note: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

\*Excludes surgeon fees.

\*\*Includes hospital and physician fees.

# Health Care Poll

**TABLE 4**

**Estimated Costs For Hospital And Nursing Home Stays**

"To the best of your knowledge, what is the normal cost for each of the following medical products/services? By cost we mean the total cost paid by the patient and others (including insurance companies), not just the out-of-pocket costs."

- A day and a night in a hospital (not including medical costs such as physician fees, lab tests and medications)
- A week in a nursing home

Base: All Adults

	Day/Night in Hospital	One Week in Nursing Home
	%	%
\$1 - \$200	16	8
\$201 - \$500	34	16
\$501 - \$1,000	22	30
\$1,001 - \$1,500	11	14
\$1,501 - \$2,500	9	13
\$2,501 - \$5,000	9	11
\$5,001 or more	-	7
<b>Estimated Average</b>	<b>\$1,058</b>	<b>\$1,918</b>
<b>Average Actual Cost</b>	<b>\$3,600*</b>	<b>\$1,250**</b>

Note: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

\*Includes all services that a hospital would routinely bill for, not just room and board.

\*\*A skilled nursing facility for acute care purposes would cost up to \$7,000 a week.

**TABLE 5**

**Estimated Costs For A Primary Care Visit**

"To the best of your knowledge, what is the normal cost for each of the following medical products/services? By cost we mean the total cost paid by the patient and others (including insurance companies), not just the out-of-pocket costs."

- A visit to a family or primary care doctor (not including the costs of lab tests or medication)

Base: All Adults

	Primary Care Visit
	%
\$1 - \$25	7
\$26 - \$50	17
\$51 - \$75	27
\$76 - \$100	25
\$101 - \$150	13
\$151 or more	11
<b>Estimated Average</b>	<b>\$97</b>
<b>Average Actual Cost</b>	<b>\$80</b>

## Health Care Poll

TABLE 6

**Estimated Costs Of An Ambulance Trip**

"To the best of your knowledge, what is the normal cost for each of the following medical products/services? By cost we mean the total cost paid by the patient and others (including insurance companies), not just the out-of-pocket costs."

- A trip to a hospital in an ambulance

Base: All Adults

	Ambulance Trip
	%
\$1 - \$100	16
\$101 - \$200	18
\$201 - \$300	16
\$301 - \$500	26
\$501 - \$750	8
\$751 - \$1,000	9
\$1,001 or more	8
<b>Estimated Average</b>	<b>\$476</b>
<b>Average Actual Cost</b>	<b>\$550</b>

Note: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Downloadable PDFs of Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Health-Care Polls are posted at [http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters\\_wsj.asp](http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters_wsj.asp).

**Methodology**

This poll was conducted online in the U.S. between June 24 and 28, 2004 among a nationwide cross section of 2,366 adults. Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, income and region were weighted where necessary to align with population proportions. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

In theory, with probability samples of this size, one could say with 95 percent certainty that the results have a sampling error of  $\pm 3$  percentage points of what they would be if the entire U.S. adult population had been polled with complete accuracy.

Unfortunately, there are several other possible sources of error in all polls or surveys that are probably more serious than theoretical calculations of sampling error. They include refusals to be interviewed (nonresponse), question wording and question order, interviewer bias, weighting by demographic control data and screening (e.g., for likely voters). It is impossible to quantify the errors that may result from these factors. This online sample was not a probability sample.

*These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.*

**About the Survey**

The Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Health-Care Poll is an exclusive poll that is published in the award-winning Health Industry Edition of The Wall Street Journal Online at [www.wsj.com/health](http://www.wsj.com/health).



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## About The Wall Street Journal Online

The Wall Street Journal Online at WSJ.com, published by Dow Jones & Company (NYSE: DJ; www.dowjones.com), offers authoritative analysis, breaking news and commentary from top industry journalists. Launched in 1996, the Online Journal is the largest paid subscription news site on the Web, with more than 689,000 subscribers world-wide. The Online Journal provides in-depth business news and financial information 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with insight and analysis, including breaking business and technology news and analysis from around the world. It draws on the Dow Jones network of more than 1,500 reporters and editors – the largest staff of business and financial journalists in the world. For the second consecutive year in 2003, the Online Journal received a WebAward for the “Best Newspaper Web Site” and was also cited by Yahoo! Internet Life magazine as the “Best Business News” site (2002 & 2001).

## About Dow Jones & Company

In addition to The Wall Street Journal and its international and online editions, Dow Jones & Company (NYSE: DJ; dowjones.com) also publishes Barron's and the Far Eastern Economic Review, Dow Jones Newswires, Dow Jones Indexes and the Ottaway group of community newspapers. Dow Jones is co-owner with Reuters Group of Factiva, with Hearst of SmartMoney and with NBC of the CNBC television operations in Asia and Europe. Dow Jones also provides news content to CNBC and radio stations in the U.S.

## About Harris Interactive

**Harris Interactive** (www.harrisinteractive.com) is a worldwide market research and consulting firm best known for *The Harris Poll*<sup>®</sup>, and for pioneering the Internet method to conduct scientifically accurate market research. Headquartered in Rochester, New York, Harris Interactive combines proprietary methodologies and technology with expertise in predictive, custom and strategic research. The Company conducts international research from its U.S. offices and through wholly owned subsidiaries—London-based **HI Europe** (www.hieurope.com), Paris-based **Novatris** and Tokyo-based **Harris Interactive Japan**—as well as through the Harris Interactive Global Network of independent market- and opinion-research firms. EOE M/F/D/V

To become a member of the Harris Poll Online<sup>SM</sup> and be invited to participate in future online surveys, visit [www.harrispollonline.com](http://www.harrispollonline.com).

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