

Dear Councillors,

On this Thursday at the Council meeting you will see an item put forth by EMS for an ordinance change. It deals with the percentage that a municipality can charge above Medicare rates. We currently sit at 125% above Medicare. When I first became director in 2009, we were at 88%. Thursday night I will be asking the council to approve the rate of 200% above Medicare, the max a City or Town can ask for. During my research of what other Cities and towns are charging I learned that of the over 100 clients Comstar has in the Commonwealth, more than 70% are at the max level. I also questioned Rick Martin, the owner, CEO of Comstar what the impact was financially on the patient if we were to raise to the max percentage. The following is a copy of his explanation:

Hello Mark,

In the vast majority of cases, a rate increase will not result in a patient paying more out of pocket. Let me be specific by primary payer:

- 1) Medicare and Medicaid patients (70% of New Bedford Patients) – no out of pocket increase
- 2) Blue Cross Blue Shield patients (3% of New Bedford Patients) – no out of pocket increase
- 3) Other Insurance Patients (13% of New Bedford Patients), before there deductible is satisfied, they will get a larger bill. Once the deductible is satisfied, no out of pocket increase
- 4) No insurance Patients (12% of New Bedford Patients), they will get a large bill. Note, historically, 90% of these folks cannot afford to pay the bill anyway.

As I have stated in Chambers before, no one has ever been forced to pay a fee for service if they can't afford it. We have a hardship request program that patients can enter into, then once approved; the fee for the transport is either reduced or written off. It has been, and continues to be my philosophy, that no one should be denied emergency services because of their inability to pay. As always, if you have any questions for me, feel free to contact me at anytime and I will be in chambers Thursday evening. Mark

Mark D McGraw EMT-P/RN  
Director, NBEMS  
181 Hillman St, BLDG #4  
New Bedford, Ma 02740

"If everyone is thinking alike, then somebody isn't thinking" George S Patton