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Is price transparency positive or negative for spine? 3 surgeons weigh in

Written by Laura Dyrda | March 13, 2019 | [Print](#) | [Email](#)



Three spine surgeons discuss how the trend toward price transparency will affect spine.

Isador Lieberman, MD. President of Texas Back Institute (Plano): Price transparency is the basis of competition and competition is good. Yes, it will have an impact; my concern is that the least expensive provider may not be the best provider. I recount the famous John Glenn quote: "as I hurtled through space, one thought kept crossing my mind — every part of this rocket was supplied by the lowest bidder." Price transparency must be accompanied by an assessment of quality and value.

Alok Sharan, MD. Co-Director of Westmed spine Center (Yonkers, N.Y.): Increased price transparency will force providers to scrutinize their activities and ensure that they are truly delivering good quality care at a reasonable cost. Unfortunately, price transparency will lead to the commoditization of a lot of the services that a physician offers. Patients/consumers are very cost sensitive; providers should be aware of their costs as compared to relative benchmarks and should be able to justify their prices. While most patients do not want to shop for care I do think patients will want to understand why one provider charges more than another.

As services become more commoditized, physicians should really rethink their strategy, and more importantly, understand how they can deliver a unique value proposition. If you can not differentiate yourself from the next provider, then you will have to compete on price, which is never a good strategy.

Scott Boden, MD. Director of Emory Orthopaedics & Spine Center (Atlanta): In principle, this is a trend that has appeared in most other industries. Unfortunately purchasing healthcare services is far more complicated than online shopping, so achieving meaningful transparency is more difficult. The other problem with transparency is that there are not reliable measures of quality, appropriate operative indications, so I am a bit concerned if healthcare choices are solely driven by price.

To participate in future Becker's Q&As, contact Laura Dyrda at ldyrda@beckershealthcare.com.

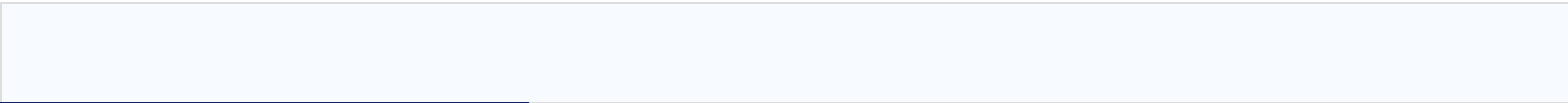
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