

Compendium Addresses Health Care Costing Problems

Health economists from government and the private sector have released a new compendium of best practices for studying the changes in U.S. health care costs. The 21 papers written by the group appeared as a special supplement to the July 2009 issues of the journal *Medical Care*. The papers identify the best methods for health costing research, such as studies of the growth in health care expenditures, identification of the cost of illness, cost-effectiveness analyses, and evaluation of health care policies.

The supplement is the result of collaboration between three federal agencies: the National Cancer Institute (NCI), the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Written by experts in health economics, epidemiology, health services research, and biostatistics, the papers discuss ways to improve and apply health care cost estimation methods and promote research in this area. Health economists from University, health plans, and private industry contributed to the effort.

The papers in the special issue examine best practices and challenges in measuring costs, conducting statistical analysis of cost data, and applying the data to policy decisions. It includes an inventory of 80 data sources that can be used in health care costing studies. The special issue also outlines an agenda for future research.

The publication, *Health Care Costing: Data, Methods, Future Directions*, is available from AHRQ Publications Clearinghouse. Please order by specifying AHRQ publication number OM 09-0079: *Medical Care* supplement on health care costing. If more than one copy is needed, please describe the reason in your request.

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