QUESTION: Are convenient care clinics (CCCs) more affordable than other health care delivery outlets?

ANSWER:
CCCs are more cost-effective for basic healthcare needs than physicians’ offices, urgent care clinics and emergency rooms. This is possible because CCCs provide high-quality care by certified nurse practitioners or physician assistants. CCCs are affordable to the insured, underinsured and uninsured alike.

CCCs accept most insurance co-payments, and patients without insurance typically pay $40 to $75 for a clinic visit, which is far less than they would be billed for emergency room care.

THE FACTS:
Average costs for treatment:
Convenient Care Clinic - $60
Emergency department - $356.00
Urgent Care - $124.00
Physician Office - $127.00

Care provided at retail clinics costs 30% to 40% less than similar care at physician offices and approximately 80% less than similar care at emergency departments.

Lower CCC costs also take the pressure off of overburdened emergency rooms by offering significantly less expensive treatment for basic medical needs.
- 12 to 14% of all ED visits can be seen at convenient care clinics.

Convenient Care Clinics offer a quick, affordable alternative for patients with pressing, non-emergency medical needs.
- CCCs prominently display their healthcare services and pricing, so patients know costs upfront.
- CCCs may reduce health care costs by providing preventive care (e.g., flu shots) and facilitating earlier access to care.
- CCCs demonstrate significant cost savings for both consumers and third-party payers.

Total treatment costs for a CCC operator were found to be approximately $300 less than emergency departments.

- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota eliminated co-pays for enrollees who used a clinic, citing $1.2 million in cost savings.

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4 BlueCross BlueShield Association, July 29, 2008.