

**Abstract of a paper presented at presented by Dr. Melody Mendiola at the Society of General Internal Medicine national conference, May 2005, and American College of Physicians Minnesota chapter scientific meeting, Nov. 2004.**

The project surveyed patients in the general internal medicine clinic and medicine walk-in clinic at HCMC in 2004 to determine if the new system of copays in Medicaid and General Assistance Medical Care is affecting patients' access to medications.

Total patients surveyed	147
Patients on Medicaid (MA) or General Assistance (GAMC) with at least one prescription in the last 6 months (includes dual eligibility with Medicare)	62 / 147 (52%)
Patients on MA or GAMC with at least 1 prescription who were reported being unable to obtain medication(s) at least once in the last 6 months because of copays	32 / 67 (47%)
Patients on MA or GAMC who reported being unable to obtain medication(s) in the last 6 months who went to the Emergency Room or were admitted to the hospital for a reason they deemed to be directly related to not having access to medications because of copays	11 / 32 (34%)
Total number of emergency room visits or hospital admissions related to lack of access to medications because of copays	27
Patients who said that their doctor was unaware that the patient was not able to obtain medications because of copays	19 / 32 (59%)
Patients who said that not being able to get their medications because of copays had negatively affected their health	24 / 32 (75%)

Examples of the problems and reasons for ER visits given by patients related to not having meds because of copays:

1. Blood pressure rises, blood clots – 2 strokes
2. No blood pressure meds, caused dizziness, which caused the ER visit
3. Bronchitis, when not taking asthma meds
4. Combination of things, stress of life and no Wellbutrin (Crisis Intervention Center)
5. Problems with diabetes when didn't take meds
6. Went to Emergency Room in order to get meds that primary wouldn't give. That's how she was able to afford her antibiotics
7. Asthma attack, and heart pains
8. High blood pressure –headaches, depression – no psych meds