

Modern Healthcare

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Minn. partnership helps lower costs

Regarding the article "[Uncompensated-care costs also hit insured: study](#)":

Under today's U.S. healthcare system, the insured do indeed pay a "hidden tax" for healthcare provided to the uninsured. But these costs are much higher than they need be. In many instances, the uninsured understandably forego care for as long as possible in hopes of avoiding a bill they won't be able to pay. As a result, they often end up in the emergency room, still unable to pay, long after less-costly intervention is possible.

While Washington debates the specifics of reforming our current system to provide affordable, comprehensive healthcare coverage for all, policymakers would do well to consider the proven return-on-investment a strong focus on primary and preventive care can provide. Our unique community-hospital partnership in Minneapolis-St. Paul bears this out with hard data. Funded mainly via grants and commitments from local hospitals and health plans, this partnership provides affordable primary and preventive health coverage to those who don't qualify for Medicaid programs, but don't make enough to access health coverage on their own (income limited to 275% of federal poverty guidelines). Emergency room utilization among the working poor covered under this partnership declines over 33% on average because of increased preventive care and earlier medical intervention. Beneficiaries live healthier lives, and the burden we all bear for uncompensated healthcare is substantially reduced.

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