



TAHP Speaks Against Price Gouging

Description

By: Shelby Stewart

Last month Chron.com reporter Alison Medley wrote an article about Laurie Delgatto-Whitten, a woman who received a \$3,000 medical bill after visiting a drive-thru COVID-19 test site in Spring operated by United Memorial Medical Center.

The hospital is now voiding charges for Delgatto-Whitten and a number of patients after an internal investigation revealed caregivers had administered and charged them for additional tests they had not consented to. “No Texas patient deserves to be price gouged,” said TAHP CEO Jamie Dudensing.

“This is a racket,” Delgatto-Whitten told Chron.com in August. “It was deceitful. The more I’ve learned about this it’s just illegal. They’re ripping people off. How many people out there are like me?”

After launching an internal audit of the records of the 159,115 patients screened for COVID-19, Untied Memorial Medical Center confirmed that a small number had received the additional respiratory pathogen panel of tests without written consent.

The issue with Delgatto-Whitten's case, according to KHOU-11, was that "the hospital ordered additional lab tests, a respiratory pathogen panel (RPP), without her knowledge or permission. United Memorial Medical Center billed \$2,715 for the extra lab work."

Attorney Justo Mendez made a statement to KHOU regarding the matter.

"It was brought to UMMC's attention that a handful of patients from the Kuykendahl Road testing site in Spring were tested for the RPP panel without their prior written consent. UMMC took those patient complaints very seriously. After conducting a throughout audit, UMMC contacted all of these patients, voided any insurance claims for services for which UMMC had no documented consent, and did not charge for the RPP tests."

The additional tests are only supposed to be administered if the patient consents, and meets the medical criteria, but more patients are coming forward with high insurance bills that include additional tests that they didn't agree to.

The Texas Association of Health Plans has said that they've seen a trend of increased COVID-19 testing prices during the pandemic. TAHP released a statement saying that they and their member plans are "fully supportive of stronger state and federal action aimed at preventing price gouging and prohibiting surprise billing for all Texans on COVID-19-related health care."

To view the Houston Chronicle's full article, [click here.](#)

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