Hospital patient readmissions may cost Medicare $8 billion

Medicare payments for patients readmitted within two months of their hospital discharge, often for the same or related conditions, could reach $8 billion per year in 1984: according to a study published in the November 23 issue of the New England Journal of Medicine by researchers at The Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions.

Moreover, the rate of readmissions may increase—at even greater annual costs to Medicare—unless steps are taken to modify current incentives, according to the study's authors.

"Recently enacted prospective - payment legislation creates economic incentives that could increase readmission rates," says one of the co-authors, Gerard F. Anderson, Ph.D., assistant Professor of health policy and management at The Johns Hopkins School of Public Health and associate director for The Johns Hopkins Center for Hospital Finance and Management.

In the prospective-payment system, hospitals receive the same Medicare payment for patients with a given illness, regardless of the severity of their illness or lenght of stay in the hospital. Congress enacted the prospective-payment system in October 1983.

"Prosphective - payment provides an incentive for physicians to discharge patients as early as possible. If patients are discharged prematurely, readmission rates may go up," says co-author Earl P. Steinberg, M.D., M.P.P., assistant professor of medicine and of health policy and management at Hopkins.

"Even a small decrease in readmissions could produce substantial savings for the Medicare program," he adds.

If the number of readmissions within 60 days of discharge could be reduced by 10 percent, for example, Medicare payments could be reduced by 2.3 percent, or more than $1 billion in 1984, the authors calculate.

"Between 1974 and 1977, 5.5 percent of Medicare patients nationally were readmitted within five days and 23 percent were readmitted within two months," Dr. Anderson says. "During that time, Medicare spent more than $600 million per year on readmissions occurring within five days of discharge and more than $2.5 billion per year on readmissions occurring within 60 days."

To reduce such costs, the authors suggest, hospitals or physicians must identify patients at greatest risk of being readmitted and for whom increased outpatient supports might prove cost effective. For instance, Drs. Anderson and Steinberg are beginning to explore alternative means of providing care, such as home health care, for high-risk patients.

"The most expensive Medicare patients tend to be those who were hospitalized repeatedly, often for the same disease, rather than those with single, cost-intensive hospital stays," the authors say.

These patients include those who are disabled or over 65.

The authors also found that patients who undergo surgery are less likely to be readmitted within short periods of time after discharge.

Twenty-three percent of patients discharged by acute-care hospitals more than once during the four years of the study accounted for 50 percent of Medicare's inpatient expenditures. The authors also found that:

- 12.5 percent of the people, discharged three or more times: accounted for almost 40 percent of the expenditures and 2.4 percent of the people, discharged more than five times, accounted for more than 20 percent of the expenditures.

Professor Anderson and Dr. Steinberg based their conclusions on analyses of Medicare payments from 1974 to 1977: the most recent information available. A grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation supported their research. Dr. Steinberg is a Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation Faculty Scholar in general internal medicine.

Arden Epps Reward Fund

Friends of the late Arden Epps are offering a reward of at least $500 to anyone furnishing information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons responsible for her death.

Mrs. Epps was found murdered in her home on S. Rosedale Street on Tuesday morning September 25, 1984. Mrs. Epps was employed at the Social Security Administration in Woodlawn, Maryland for many years.

All information provided will be held in strict confidence by the Baltimore City Police Department.

Anyone having such information should contact the Homicide Unit of the Baltimore City Police Department at 396-2721.

All interested persons who would like to make additional contributions to this fund may do so by making checks or money orders payable to The Arden S. Epps Reward Fund and forward to:

Arden S. Epps Reward Fund, P.O. Box 22695, Baltimore, Maryland 21203.

Please do not send cash authenticity may be verified with the Baltimore City Police Department.

Senate president kills controversial abortion legislation

By Carl Korn

ANNAPOLIS, MD. - Senate President Melvin Steinberg backed away Tuesday from compromise abortion legislation for fear it would ignite a political "bloodbath" in an election year.

After a series of leadership meetings, Steinberg learned that he did not have the votes to pass legislation liberalizing conditions under which poor women could have abortions funded by the state Medicaid program - and still have a successful legislative session.

Steinberg's 24-23 majority - which at best could have become 26-21 - would not have been enough to squelch a filibuster, and would probably result in "payback" that could scuttle other important legislation.

"The environment has changed now. It would be an exercise in futility (to introduce the bill now)," said Steinberg, D-Baltimore County. "We would wind up with the same compromise but it would take a bloodbath to do it."

Also, once the legislation passed the General Assembly, Steinberg said either "pro-choice or right-to-life" organizations could lead a fight to bring the issue up for referendum.

That, Steinberg said, would affect the 1986 gubernatorial campaign and election campaigns of the 188 members of the General Assembly.

"It would become a one-issue campaign," Steinberg said. "It would become a referendum on abortion. It would be perverted into an issue of abortion rather than one of restrictive language." Steinberg said legislative districts - consisting of one senator and three delegates - would be thrown into turmoil. "We would be breaking political alliances. There would be hard feelings," he said.

Steinberg, knowing that the abortion issue was holding up the most important legislation in the 1984 session, agreed to introduce a bill this year that would separate the abortion issue from the budget.

The abortion language currently in the budget provides for Medicaid funding if a doctor determines continuing the pregnancy would jeopardize the woman's physical and mental health.

The abortion bill that Steinberg would have introduced would have removed a requirement for written certification from a physician saying that carrying the child to term would threaten the mother's physical well-being.

The decision, which Steinberg said was urged by numerous senators who feared the legislation threatened the "welfare of the Senate," throws the abortion battle back to the House of Delegates.

The House considers the state budget first, and has traditionally waged fierce rhetorical combat over the issue. The House voted three times on the abortion language last year.

"We had an understanding," said House Speaker Benjamin Cardin, D-Baltimore. "This is a disappointment."

But Steinberg said he was persuaded by senators who told him, "You can't separate yourself individually from the presidency of the Senate. You're putting us in a difficult position of going against our leader."

Emergency task force to raise $100,000 for Ethiopian relief

By Wendy Zentz

BALTIMORE - The Emergency Task Force on Ethiopia Tuesday raised its fund-raising goal for starving Africans to $100,000 and challenged the federal government to match the group's concern.

The Baltimore-based coalition of 12 religious groups set a $10,000 target Nov. 9. But the response far exceeded the goal, enabling the group to deposit $30,000 for relief in a local bank which volunteered to handle the money free of charge.

Rep. Parren Mitchell, D-Md., lent his support to the six-month fund-raising effort and vowed to re-introduce a $450 Million dollar relief bill in the next session of Congress.

"I think the situation is so critical that we'll get much speedier action," said Mitchell, a co-sponsor of the bill.

John Springer, director of the coalition, also called on the Reagan administration to match the concern of private citizens by using his executive power to pledge $160 million in relief.

"The real resource is the government," Springer said. "If we relied on private donors, we'd never get anywhere."

"If we were on the ball from the beginning, people wouldn't be dying," he added.

Relief agencies currently list 20 African countries with populations exceeding 100 million at risk of drought and civil war.

Mitchell attributed the sluggish response from the Reagan administration to political considerations.

"The Reagan administration opposed the government in Ethiopia because it is a Marxist government. I don't think we should let political ideologies interfere with human need," he said.

Mitchell predicted efforts like the Emergency Task Force on Ethiopia would force the administration to act.

"When you look at what's been raised in short period of time, it does mean there is concern about those starving in Africa," he said.

"I think they (the administration) have no choice, especially with the amount of concern demonstrated by the public. It almost forces the administration to act."

Mitchell agreed to meet with local groups in January to help the coalition meet its $100,000 goal.

Donations made out to "Ethiopian Relief" can be sent to: Carrollton Bank of Baltimore, P.O. Box 1391, Baltimore, MD. 21203.

—Columbia Capers

Continued from Page 12

always wanted to be associated with young ladies who are doing dynamic things in their professions." "Following their example I will be able to grow and have someone to guide me in the right direction."

Celonia Walden II remarked: "I heard about the Youth Club in Baltimore, but I wanted to become a part of a Columbia-based club with young ladies of my age. This club will enable me to become more involved in Columbia projects such as the Black History Fair and to fellowship with my friends and get support from them."

Gail Baker Allen said: "I wanted to become a member of a club that was meaningful and to be among a group of young ladies that had a common interest. I want to help young people in some way. I believe this club has the answer for me."

Vivian Daniels said: "I like the idea of being a part of any young woman's group, getting to know other black women, getting the insight of what they are doing, gaining knowledge from their experiences and they can likewise, particularly being a part of things happening in our community."

Janet DeShields stated: "I became interested after attending the Founder's Day observance and listening to the accomplishments made by members. I felt that it would be beneficial to my sister Daphne and I spoke with Mrs. Lowery and learned that we needed ten young ladies to get started. We thought of ten names on our way home from the luncheon and within a week we made our calls and were ready to start moving." Both girls feel that through networking they will be able to gain in this club.

Other members of the B&P Club present and welcoming the new group were: Roberta Briscoe, president; Dr. Daphne Harrison Comegys, Black History professor UMBC and financial secretary; Yours truly, treasurer; Daisy Lewis, Washington, DC, national organizer of the Columbia Club in 1978 and Callie Green, guest and aunt of Carolyn Brown.

A delightful reception followed during the fellowship hour.

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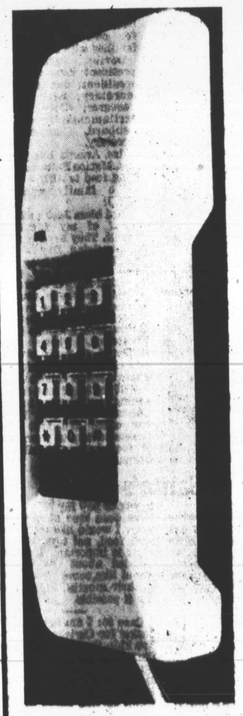

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In this dark world of sin.
The blood of Jesus whispered,
'Peace within'.
Peace, perfect, peace
by thronging duties pressed.
To do the will of Jesus,
This is rest.
Peace, perfect, peace
With sorrow's surging round
On Jesus' bosom, naught but
Calm is found.
It is enough;
Earth's struggles soon shall cease,
And Jesus call us to Heaven's
Perfect peace.

CHILDREN and GRANDCHILDREN

INEZ - In loving memory of our dear one, INEZ BICE, who passed away November 21, 1959.
Sad and sudden was the call,
Of one so dearly loved by all.
A bitter grief, a shock severe,
It was to part with one so dear.
We often sit and think of you,
And speak of how you died.
To think you could not say goodbye
Before you closed your eyes.
For all of us you did your best,
Oh, God grant you eternal rest.

HUSBAND - SONS
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and BROTHERS

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$12,909-$16,760

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222 E. Saratoga Street
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Rare opportunity. Close to shopping and transp. Excellent condition. Air conditioned.
1 Bedroom fr. $270 mo.
Plus Utilities—NO PETS
CALL ROBBINS REALTY
486-3350
Leased & Managed by Robbins Realty
A Division of Tolles Construction Co. Inc.
EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

Suburban living with city conveniences!
Garden and Townhouse Apartments
HARBOR VIEW
1, 2, or 3 bedroom townhouse apartments
Large living room, modern kitchen with dining area, ceramic bath, storage area, individually controlled heat.
from $285 monthly
HILLSIDE PARK
Roomy garden apartments with lots of outdoor space. Big living room, dining area, large modern kitchen, ceramic tiled bath, individually controlled heat. Stage with outdoor balconies.
from $285 monthly
CHERRY HILL GARDENS
All with 2 bedrooms
Roomy living room, dining area, modern kitchen with gas range and built ins. Individually controlled heat.
All only $219 monthly
HOW TO GET THERE: Drive down Hanover St., turn right at Cherry Hill Road. Follow signs to Cherry Hill Rd. and Hanover. Stop at Rental Office at Cherry Hill Rd. and Potee St. Open Mon. thru Fri. 9 to 6:00 Sat. 9 to 1.
Professionally managed by
CITY WIDE MANAGEMENT CO.
Rental Office 355-6940 / Downtown Office: 837-2030

LOTTERY

The lottery numbers since November 14, 1984 were:

DC LOTTERY

PICK THREE

11-14-84	039
11-15-84	576
11-16-84	015
11-17-84	652
11-19-84	292
11-20-84	008

Md. LOTTERY

PICK THREE

11-14-84	288
11-15-84	806
11-16-84	432
11-17-84	204
11-19-84	737
11-20-84	433

PICK FOUR

11-14-84	0390
11-15-84	9348
11-16-84	8329
11-19-84	8882
11-20-84	8202

LOTTO

11-17-84
01 12 15 21 30 35

128
987

274
863
444

189
042
287

613
304
086

451
569

027
739

SEPTEMBER '84

M	TU	W	TH	F	SA
					894
3 126	4 885	5 176	6 458	7 101	8 184
10 946	11 031	12 388	13 023	14 960	15 134
17 336	18 530	19 764	20 682	21 191	22 742
24 398	25 398	26 481	27 849	28 723	29 173

Md. Lottery

Mr. Fro picked 051 last week that hit Nov. 16.

135 392 387
261 692 602
842 123 527
783 406 852

572 851 960
739 264 384

SEPTEMBER '84

M	TU	W	TH	F	SAT
					000
3 542	4 537	5 127	6 389	7 946	8 128
10 438	11 631	12 607	13 831	14 200	15 035
17 218	18 408	19 887	20 044	21 480	22 039
24 648	25 849	26 482	27 164	28 404	29 012

D.C. Lottery

HEADERS

313 747
658 399 939
006 660
131 622 288
335

585 448 556
779 616 080
909 883 116

Doubleheaders are coming hot and heavy in the D.C. & MD Lottery. The AFRO hit on 288 Nov. 14 (MD) and 008 on Nov. 13 (D.C.).