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Web Exclusive: Cost of Multiple Illnesses

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When looking at overall health condition costs per patient, cancer tops the list in the United States, according to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. It's also possible that a patient may have heart disease, which is No. 2 on the list of most expensive health conditions. Healthcare isn't cheap and when patients have comorbid illnesses, those costs can skyrocket.

In a study on the healthcare costs associated with comorbid illness in patients with endometrial carcinoma, it found that in more than 5,700 women who underwent a hysterectomy, more than half had a comorbid illness, such as heart disease or diabetes.

Researchers noted the average patient had three comorbid illnesses. Because of the comorbid health condition, a greater risk of infection and complications was seen, and contributed to prolonged hospital stays and increased overall costs.

In addition to the issues that increase cancer therapy cost, diabetes and other comorbid conditions have also seen increased costs. A report announced in November 2006 by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality noted that costs associated with diabetes rose dramatically between 1996 and 2003, largely because of the increase in prescription drug costs. Patients between the ages of 40 and 65 saw the most increase, with drug prices doubling. Coupled with the rising costs of cancer care, patients are finding it difficult to pay for their therapies.