The Cost of Cancer

After my prostate cancer surgery, I take a look at the literal costs of radiation therapy, androgen deprivation therapy and more.

December 5, 2022 By Dan Zeller

Cancer isn't cheap.

I received the last of my Explanation of Benefits statements covering my salvage radiation therapy (SRT) with concurrent androgen deprivation therapy (ADT). You know me. For grins and giggles, I had to play with the numbers.

Ouch!

Therapy	Billed
Radical Prostatectomy and post-surgery infection (January 2011)	$109,989
Salvage Radiation Therapy (incl. 6-month Eligard dose) (May-August 2022)	$176,548
Total	$286,737

Those numbers do not include all of the doctor visits and PSA tests from diagnosis to today—just the surgery and SRT/ADT.

For the radical prostatectomy and the subsequent infection hospitalization, that's what the hospital and doctors billed my employer-provided health insurance company. Of course, the insurance company didn't pay the hospital the full amount, and I had some copay responsibilities to the tune of $4,372 as well.

For the SRT/ADT, the "Billed" number is what USCD has billed the VA for my treatment. Each zapping session was billed at $3,894. (My radiation oncologist had no idea it was that expensive. As a university employee, he's not involved in billing.) It appears that the VA is reimbursing UCSD at a rate of somewhere between 10% and 15% of the billed costs.

Coincidentally, I came across this article about the costs of ADT: It cost $38,398 for a single shot of a very old cancer drug. My Eligard shot was billed at $10,835. What a deal! <sarcasm font>

Of course, the emotional cost of cancer is incalculable.

Moral of the story: Don’t get sick without health insurance.

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http://beta.docker.cancerhealth.com/blog/cost-cancer-prostate-radiation-therapy