



Patient Power

A CLL Patient's Perspective on Speaking Up About High Medical Bills

Eliot Finkelstein
Patient Advocate

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Andrew Schorr:

Eliot, what advice do you have to people? You've had this journey, you've had to double-check with a magnifying glass your doctor bills, your hospital bills, and you have a couple different insurance policies now.

Eliot Finkelstein:

My biggest thing is you need to stand up, you need to speak up in a very nice way. Also, whenever you're prescribed a drug, call the drug company, go online to the drug company, see if you can get it cheaper. I'm doing eyedrops because I've got dry eyes, and I went online to the company, and they have a discount that you can print out, and I didn't have to contact anybody. So, it went from my maximum of \$30 a month, down to \$5 to 10 a month. So, you can call the drug company. You can take care of whoever it is and see what they've got, and you can ask. Don't be shy about calling. The other thing is to speak up when you get a bill.

Some of my bills, because I'm out of state—mine is Blue Cross/Blue Shield of California—how crazy it is is the lab sent a bill to Blue Cross of Nevada, and it was supposed to be sent to Blue Cross of Arizona, where I live, but if it's sent to Blue Cross of California, it's considered out of network. And so, it's a billing error, but we keep getting those because someone in the billing department of whatever company sent it to the wrong place.

So, you have to keep eyes out for that, and you have to be really strong in talking to the people, and if you don't get the answer you want on the phone, you say, "Let me speak to someone who can give me that answer," and you keep pushing it up the ladder. They'll try and tell you, "Well, the supervisor is not here." "Well, you're not the head of the company. Give me someone else. Give me their supervisor." Keep pushing and take names, dates of when you talked to them, and the gist of the conversation, and just write it down. Those are the biggest things. And, you're allowed to tell a doctor no.

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