Hospitalizing the unvaccinated has cost U.S. nearly $6 billion

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(HealthDay)—The cost of providing hospital care for unvaccinated

Americans has reached $5.7 billion in just three months, *CBS News* reported.

Between June and August, about 287,000 people who were not vaccinated were hospitalized for COVID-19 in the United States, according to data from the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) and the Peterson Center on Healthcare, which collaborated to track health care costs and quality.

Most adults in the United States have had access to vaccines since the spring, so these hospital stays could likely have been avoided, the study authors noted.

In the new report, the KFF-Peterson team used data from the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to estimate the average cost of hospitalization with COVID-19 at $20,000 per person. They then calculated the overall expense at $5.7 billion.

"This ballpark figure is likely an understatement of the cost burden from preventable treatment of COVID-19 among unvaccinated adults," the authors wrote, noting that the study doesn't account for outpatient costs.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, compared to fully vaccinated people, those who are unvaccinated are 11 times more likely to die from COVID-19.

This study factored in that vaccines are effective in preventing severe illness and hospitalization, and the occurrence of breakthrough infections in fully vaccinated people.

The expense of health care for people with COVID-19 is "borne not only by patients but also by society more broadly, including taxpayer-funded public programs and private insurance premiums paid by workers,

businesses and individual purchasers," according to the authors of the report.

These shared costs—for copays, coinsurance or payments toward a deductible—have not always been passed on to the patient, but they soon could be.

As of November 2020, nearly 90% of insured individuals would have had their out-of-pocket costs waived if they were hospitalized for COVID-19, according to the report. Now, more than 70% of the largest insurers are not waiving treatment costs. Another 10% will phase out cost-sharing by the end of next month, *CBS News* reported.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on COVID-19.

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