Heart surgery with a guarantee

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A Pennsylvania hospital group is offering a 90-day guarantee of workmanship for surgery.

Geisinger Health System is charging a flat fee on elective heart bypass surgery and offering 90 days of follow-up treatment. The hospital said it won't charge the insurance company if a patient suffers complications or has to come back to the hospital, The New York Times said Thursday.

Since the experiment started in February 2006, patients have been less likely to return to intensive care and spent fewer days in the hospital, Geisinger said.

The hospital charges a flat fee for the surgery, plus half of what it has calculated as the historical cost of related care for the next 90 days. Geisinger absorbs the extra cost of any additional hospital stays.

The program, dubbed ProvenCare, is a departure from the typical medical reimbursement system in this country, which gives doctors and hospitals little incentive to ensure that the patients don't end up returning for additional hospital stays, the newspaper said.

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