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Growth In US Health Spending Remained Slow In 2010; Health Share Of Gross Domestic Product Was Unchanged From 2009

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Abstract

Medical goods and services are generally viewed as necessities. Even so, the latest recession had a dramatic effect on their utilization. US health spending grew more slowly in 2009 and 2010—at rates of 3.8 percent and 3.9 percent, respectively—than in any other years during the fifty-one-year history of the National Health Expenditure Accounts. In 2010 extraordinarily slow growth in the use and intensity of services led to slower growth in spending for personal health care. The rates of growth in overall US gross domestic product (GDP) and in health spending began to converge in 2010. As a result, the health spending share of GDP stabilized at 17.9 percent.

Topics:
Costs and spending | Cost growth | Private health insurance | Medicaid | Premiums | Prescription drugs | Medicare Advantage | Payment | Federal health plans | Medicare

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NOTES

1.

All National Health Expenditure Accounts data are presented in nominal terms and thus are comparable to other dollar figures in nominal terms unless otherwise specified.

2.

The National Health Expenditure Accounts definition of *out-of-pocket spending* includes direct spending by consumers for health care goods and services—such as copayments and deductibles—for people with any type of insurance coverage (private, Medicare, or Medicaid) and spending for care by the uninsured. It does not include any premiums paid for coverage.

3.

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services . *National Health Expenditure Accounts: definitions, sources, and methods 2010* [Internet]. Baltimore (MD) : CMS ; 2012 Jan [cited 2012 Jan 9]. Available from: http://www.cms.gov/NationalHealthExpendData/downloads/dsm-10.pdf

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In this month's *Health Affairs*, Anne Martin and coauthors, all with the Office of the Actuary at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), take that agency's annual look back at national health spending in the previous year. They report that as a result of the recent recession and its aftermath, US health spending in 2009 and 2010 grew more slowly than in any other years in the fifty-one-year history of the National Health Expenditure Accounts. Overall, health spending accounted for 17.9 percent of the US gross domestic product in 2010—stable from the previous year.

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