Our view

Health care industry needs transparency

The issue: *A New Mexico nonprofit wants the state Legislature to make the medical industry provide cost information.*

What we say: *Transparency is needed in our health care industry for consumers to make better choices.*

Can you imagine buying a hamburger but not knowing how much it would cost? Or how about purchasing a car but not really knowing the full purchase price? While the above is not the norm for some industries, the medical care industry is a maze of private contracts, agreements and costs that rarely, if ever, comes before the patient — the consumer. Some theorize this results in health care costs skyrocketing. Yet, there is the expectation that consumers need to make better healthcare purchase choices. But without good information, how can a consumer be expected to make a good financial decision when it comes to medical care?

Think New Mexico, a Santa Fe-think tank, is proposing that the veil be taken away when it comes to health care prices. Think New Mexico is asking the Legislature to change state law to allow greater cost transparency between medical providers, insurers and patients. The Legislature meets for 60 days beginning this week and one piece of legislation being proposed would tear down legal hurdles to cost information and create an easy way to build a website to compare costs.

The result, it is hoped, is a more educated consumer about the actual costs of health care who would then chose more efficient care.

States such as Arizona, California, Colorado, Utah and Nevada have similar transparency laws and programs in place providing data on quality of care as well as the costs of care at hospitals and medical providers.

New Mexico should at least join this discussion about infusing transparency into our health care industry and take down barriers that inhibit the consumer/patient from making the best choices.