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Sharp HealthCare and Nonprofit FHCE to Present Software Answer to \$49 Billion Hospital Industry Shortfall with Results from 25-Month ER Study

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SAN MATEO, Calif., Feb. 27, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- While thousands of hospitals struggle to find better ways to meet the needs of uninsured and private pay patients, [Sharp HealthCare](#) will present a welcome solution with findings from a [25-month study of uninsured](#) patients cared for at its four busy San Diego ERs. In an innovative partnership with the [Foundation for Health Coverage Education](#) (FHCE), Sharp will shed new light on how hospitals can gain reimbursement while providing patients with much-needed assistance at the annual Health Information Management Systems Society (HIMSS) conference in New Orleans, Monday, March 4.

The architects of the new approach, Gerilynn Sevenikar, vice president of Patient Financial Services for Sharp HealthCare, and Ankeny Minoux, president of FHCE, will present "How Hospitals Can Improve their Bottom Line and Relationships with Uninsured Patients," covering the lessons learned and steps other hospitals can take, at 9:45 a.m. in room 347 of the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center.

Minoux and Sevenikar will share insights into the Sharp approach, which has its genesis in FHCE's free Eligibility Quiz that allows uninsured ER patients to identify which public and private low-cost coverage options for which they may qualify through a simple, 90-second, five-step quiz. During the 25-month study, Sharp discovered more than 80% of the patients who took the survey were not enrolled in free or low-cost government programs for which they were eligible.

Armed with this critical insight, Sevenikar and her team at Sharp, working closely with FHCE, further refined the approach by incorporating the FHCE coverage and enrollment data along with the organization's admitting protocols and financial systems. The end result made it possible for every ER patient to receive a list of available coverage options during the point-of-care step.

Sharp also took the effort several steps further by providing enrollment assistance and conducting intensive training, which taught about equal patient care. The result has been collecting millions of dollars in reimbursement, including direct self-pay revenue and money straight from the patients over the past three years due to the success of the program.

"Most self-pay patients want to contribute toward their bill, but because of the laborious nature of qualifying for assistance on both the patient's and the hospital's end, they often give up and leave the hospital unfunded," said Sevenikar. "We needed a solution that helped us and helped our patients – through FHCE we found the answer."

Based on the success of the Sharp program, and interest from other hospitals, FHCE expanded its basic Eligibility Quiz and launched [PointCare](#), a for-profit patient advocacy company in September of 2012. Sharp and several other hospitals and clinics are now using the

technology-based solution to change the tone of financial conversations with their uninsured patients.

"Regardless of when health care reform takes full implementation, millions of people remain without health care coverage today, and we must find ways to help them and the hospitals losing money simply because they provide necessary health care services," said Minoux.

An independent third-party study analyzing government statistics puts the unpaid tab to hospitals caring for uninsured patients at \$49 billion annually.

PointCare is a low-cost monthly subscription-based service. It is modeled after the highly-successful Health Coverage Eligibility Quiz offered by the non-profit, Foundation for Health Coverage Education (www.coverageforall.org), which has helped more than 5 million people nationwide navigate the complex health insurance system.

The mission of California-based PointCare is to provide tools that strengthen the dignity of self-pay patients through the effective, empathetic, and compassionate communication of health coverage options from the hospital, health clinic, or doctor's office to the patient. For more information or to request a demo, visit www.PointCare.com or call 650-762-1928.

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