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## Small practice changes can reduce total cost of care

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**Editor's note:** *The 2018 AAP National Conference & Exhibition will take place from Nov. 2-6 in Orlando.*

It's no secret health care clinicians increasingly are being called on to provide low-cost, high-quality care. Many, however, feel hamstrung.

"Everyone is talking about the high cost of care, but few are giving specific data to physicians on how to manage it," said Suzanne K. Berman, M.D., FAAP, a member of the AAP Committee on Child Health Financing (COCHF) and Section on Administration and Practice Management Executive Committee. "This is not unlike telling people they need to eat better, but then refusing to let them read the nutrition information on package labels."

Dr. Berman aims to provide pediatricians with specific suggestions on how they can minimize costs during a session titled "Pediatric Purse Strings: How to Predict the Cost of Care (F3082)," which will be held from 2-2:45 p.m. Monday, Nov. 5, in room W311GH of the convention center.

Dr. Berman acknowledges that individual pediatricians may have little immediate influence over many of the biggest drivers of cost such as extreme prematurity, obesity and neonatal abstinence syndrome.

"That said, there is still a significant set of cost drivers which are entirely (or almost entirely) within the physician's purview, such as a choice between two medications which work comparably in most clinical situations; choice of imaging when either will do; choice of referral centers and choice of lab testing algorithms," she said.

The session will focus on these manageable cost drivers.

"I'm going to try to give all attendees at least three to four actionable, needle-moving tips that can be immediately implemented," said Dr. Berman, managing partner, Plateau Pediatrics, Crossville, Tenn.

Dr. Berman calls herself a data geek and has a long history of using data to influence change.

“My earliest memory of attempting to improve an operational system was fifth grade, when I made notes about all the ways Field Day was done wrong and submitted a list of suggestions for immediate implementation to my amused teacher,” she said.

Since then, she has gained insights into health care payment systems by working with COCHF and by providing feedback to Tennessee’s value-based Medicaid programs.

“Pediatricians can take simple steps to be mindful of costs,” she said. “There are certainly broader, larger quality improvement projects pediatricians can pursue, but even a small handful of very modest changes can improve the total cost of care.”

*For more coverage of the 2018 AAP National Conference & Exhibition visit <http://www.aapublications.org/content/aap-national-conference-2018> and follow @AAPNews on *Twitter* and *Facebook*.*

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