

What you should know if a patient crowdfunds for medical care

September 17, 2021

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Article type: [AAP National Conference & Exhibition](#)

Topics: [Ethics/Bioethics](#)

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Move over bake sales and silent auctions. Many families are turning to crowdfunding to raise money for a child's medical care.

As the name implies, crowdfunding solicits donations from a large number of people for an initiative or charitable cause. A request is put out on the internet or app inviting friends and strangers to contribute.

While crowdfunding to pay for medical bills may seem more lucrative than selling cookies and brownies, the practice also raises some sticky issues of which pediatricians should be aware.

John D. Lantos, M.D., FAAP, director of pediatric bioethics at Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City, Mo., delves into those concerns during the on-demand session titled "Ethical Issues in Crowdfunding a Child's Care" (OD0109).

According to a recent [study](#) in *JAMA Network Open*, the number of medical fundraisers on GoFundMe increased from 42 in 2010 to 119,373 in 2018. The campaigns sought more than \$10 billion for medical expenses in the U.S., and more than \$3 billion was raised.

"Crowdfunding raises some difficult issues related to shortcomings of our health care system and to the effects that it may have on increasing health disparities," Dr. Lantos said.

During the session, Dr. Lantos discusses the rise of crowdfunding and how well it works.

He noted that only about 10% of campaigns reach their goals, a statistic pediatricians should share with families.

"A successful campaign takes a lot of work and energy that may deplete the energy that they (parents) have for caring for their child," Dr. Lantos said.

Still, crowdfunding is big business and is here to stay, he said.

"On a larger level, crowdfunding can highlight the problems in our current health care system," Dr. Lantos said. "If many patients are having trouble paying for needed medical care, it would be better to change the system than to support crowdfunding."

