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At least for a few months this year, Des Moines, Iowa, breast cancer survivor Judy Quick refused to pay her higher Mission bill. The Iowa Clinic now provides her care in West Des Moines. CODY SCANLAN/DES MOINES REGISTER

Hospital buyouts drive up costs for patients

Research highlights appeal of oncology deals

Lee Rood
Des Moines Register
USA TODAY NETWORK

DES MOINES – Tim Day was determined to bring a positive attitude to his treatment after a scary stage 4 cancer diagnosis in 2019. But he learned soon enough he’d need to bring a lot of money, too.

Aggressive prostate cancer, already metastasized, meant surgery, chemo and other wildly expensive hormone therapy drugs, one that billed out to his insurance at \$14,500 a month. Monthly bills he paid just for the hormone therapy drugs amounted to a hefty car payment. Day lost track of his out-of-pocket expenses when they reached around \$26,000 within the first two years – not at all unusual in a state like Iowa with surging cancer diagnoses, growing survivor population, rising insurance pre-

“Where is the empathy and compassion to the patient? At what point in time did it become such a for-profit business model?”

Tim Day
Stage 4 cancer survivor

miums and health care prices.

Seven years later, the 67-year-old Iowa resident feels immense relief and gratitude knowing he’s in remission. Prostate-specific antigen, or PSA, tests for the cancer marker that once read off the charts now come back undetectable.

“It feels fantastic,” Day said.

But after the University of Iowa Health Care’s system purchased the Des Moines metro’s largest independent oncology practice, Mission Cancer + Blood, the price for the life-saving injections Day needs to keep the cancer at

bay rose fivefold.

That’s made him consider all the patients whose lives stand to be upended because they can’t afford those higher bills. UIHC, a state-run non-profit, has said it’s building a state-wide cancer-care network. Day wants to know: At what cost?

“Where is the empathy and compassion to the patient?” he asked. “At what point in time did it become such a for-profit business model?”

Mission Cancer’s higher prices after its acquisition by UIHC are demonstrative of a national acceleration in health care spending over the past two decades. Across the health care industry, prices have increased for patients, insurers and employers as giant hospital networks have more frequently bought up independent clinics, new research on such sales nationally shows.

“What the evidence suggests is that this is going to make health care more

See BUYOUTS, Page 4A

Dispute over data center

Marta Mieke
Springfield News-Leader
USA TODAY NETWORK

As Springfield leaders continue to grapple with what regulations for data centers may look like in the future, one local property has highlighted the gray area between past zoning designations and current definitions.

The possibility of a data center at 2900 S. National Ave. has been a topic of conversation for months, particularly as the city has hosted several public engagement sessions to gather input as it drafts data center regulations. Springfield City Council in late June approved a 120-day administrative delay on data center developments. While that is set to expire in mid-November, City Manager David Cameron has stated an extension of the moratorium is likely.

Data centers are facilities that house computer servers to compute applications and power digital services. While data centers have been around for years, they have become far more common, grown larger in scale and power consumption, and dominated recent debates due to the artificial intelligence boom that has created greater demand for such infrastructure.

A rezoning application was filed recently for the property at 2900 S. National that would have changed the zoning designation from a planned development, a uniquely crafted zoning district with tailored requirements, to C-MX2, commercial mixed-use community district created through the city’s recent land development code revamp efforts. The rezoning application indicated the change was sought to allow for a veterinary clinic and did not include mentions of a data center or data processing facility.

The rezoning, set to be in front of

See DATA CENTER, Page 9A



The owner of the property at 2900 S. National Ave. has proposed to revamp the basement of one of the buildings into a data center, which he believes is allowed under the current planned development zoning. The city disagrees.

MARTA MIEZE/SPRINGFIELD NEWS-LEADER



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