

Medicaid Not Spending “\$10 million on Viagra”

In your recent article (“Simpson: Medicaid in state a shambles”), Representative Jim Simpson, (R-Pass Christian), was quoted as saying, “Medicaid is an absolute shambles,” and “We spent \$10 million on Viagra,” Both of these statements are untrue, and unfortunate. The truth is Mississippians should be proud of their Medicaid program. We serve over 650,000 of our state’s elderly, disabled and poor by providing the means for them to obtain healthcare. Healthcare they would not otherwise be able to get.

Mississippi Medicaid accomplishes this important work with an administrative cost to the taxpayer of less than four percent of our total budget. That’s one of the lowest administrative costs for any Medicaid program in the nation. We account for seven percent of our state’s general funds. The national average is over fourteen percent. While there are current budget challenges, the Medicaid program is not in “shambles”.

On November 30, 1998, the United States Department of Health and Human Services informed state Medicaid programs that the prescription drug Viagra must be covered through the Medicaid programs. In response to this mandate, Mississippi Medicaid placed Viagra on prior approval with the amount of pills limited to two (2) per month. Our data shows that the Mississippi Division of Medicaid has paid out \$425,414.72 for the four-year period between 04/06/1998 through 04/22/2002. This is from the time we first started to pay for Viagra to now. Thank you for the opportunity to set the record straight.

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