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What Makes Patients Shop for Prices?

I was invited to participate in a roundtable discussion with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The topic was price transparency. Several participants want senior citizens to shop based on price and quality, but these are vague terms.

I asked whether the word “price” meant the charge, the negotiated price, or the actual cost? And what exactly is their definition of “quality”? Quality measures are often compliance measures, wasting doctor’s time and not valued by the patient.

At the end of the day, I said, people care and ask about price and quality when the dollars come out of their own pockets—and the government isn't going to see traditional shopping behaviors until they do.