

**MyChoice is a bad Choice – Consumers Should Be Wary of Inexpensive Blue Cross “Insurance”**

In late October, Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina announced MyChoice – a health plan that markets itself as a lower cost alternative to other health insurance. Yes, the premiums are claimed to be significantly lower. But it may not save you money on medical bills. In fact, you may be risking your financial health by subscribing to this plan.

MyChoice is not insurance in the way most consumers think. In addition to your monthly premiums, it requires you to pay your medical bills out of your own pocket, likely up front, then submit for reimbursement. Operating much like a mail-in rebate on a major purchase – but far more complicated.

Because the plan is not contracted with doctors, hospitals, or other health care providers, there are no negotiated rates for services between the plan and providers. Essentially this means BCBSNC will reimburse you what it feels your health care is worth – not what your doctor may have billed you. While all Novant Health facilities and physicians provide substantial discounts to patients who don't have traditional insurance, the discounted charges may be far more than MyChoice will reimburse you. It may not matter that much for a straightforward physician office visit, but the financial out-of-pocket could be huge for other services.

The bottom line: BCBSNC is under no obligation to reimburse you what you paid your provider – or an amount even close to it. Insurance is for more than just a yearly physical, it is comfort that a car accident, mountain biking crash or sudden illness won't wreck your finances. If a major health event happens while you are subscribed to MyChoice, the plan could leave you holding the bag for very large medical bills.

Consumers and small business owners should be wary about buying MyChoice. Small businesses should be concerned about the financial health of their employees if they offer this plan. There's a reason this kind of insurance died a long time ago. This isn't transformational value based care in any form. MyChoice is a choice that comes with significant personal financial risks to subscribers.



*Bob Seehausen is senior vice president of business development & sales for Novant Health. He is the former board chair of Inclusive Health, a high-risk insurance pool for the state of North Carolina that provided health coverage to people with pre-existing conditions. Seehausen is a passionate advocate for affordable health insurance for all people – regardless of their medical status.*