



Total Hip, \$13,000



The Soaring Cost of a Simple Breath



Robin Levi's two daughters both have asthma, but they are able to control it thanks to good insurance coverage. Some students Ms. Levi tutors also suffer from asthma but lack the same insurance and medical care. Sean Patrick Farrell/The New York Times; photo by Max Whittaker for The New York Times

E-MAIL

By **ELISABETH ROSENTHAL** OCTOBER 12, 2013

FACEBOOK

OAKLAND, Calif. — The kitchen counter in the home of the Hayes family is scattered with the inhalers, sprays and bottles

TWITTER

YOUR PERSPECTIVE

Has buying a prescription drug strained your budget or have you used a medicine more sparingly than prescribed because of cost? Tell us which drug was involved.

SUBMIT

Readers have shared their



The \$2.7 Trillion Medical Bill

Colonoscopies Explain Why U.S. Leads the World in Health Expenditures

By ELISABETH ROSENTHAL | Published: June 1, 2013



 Angiogram	 Colonoscopy	 Hip replacement	 Lipitor	 M.R.I. scan
AVG. U.S. PRICE	AVG. U.S. PRICE	AVG. U.S. PRICE	AVG. U.S. PRICE	AVG. U.S. PRICE
\$914	\$1,185	\$40,364	\$124	\$1,121
CANADA	SWITZERLAND	SPAIN	NEW ZEALAND	NETHERLANDS
\$35	\$655	\$7,731	\$6	\$319

Source: 2012 Comparative Price Report by the International Federation of Health Plans. The average prices shown for colonoscopies do not include added fees for sedation by an anesthesiologist, a practice common in the United States, but unusual in the rest of the world. The additional charges can increase the cost significantly.

FACEBOOK

MERRICK, N.Y. — Deirdre Yapalater's recent [colonoscopy](#) at a

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surgical center near her home here on Long Island went smoothly: she was whisked from

GOOGLE

pre-op to an operating room where a gastroenterologist, assisted by an anesthesiologist

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and a nurse, performed the routine [cancer](#) screening procedure in less than an hour. The

PRINT

test, which found nothing worrisome, racked up what is likely her most expensive medical bill of the year: \$6,385.

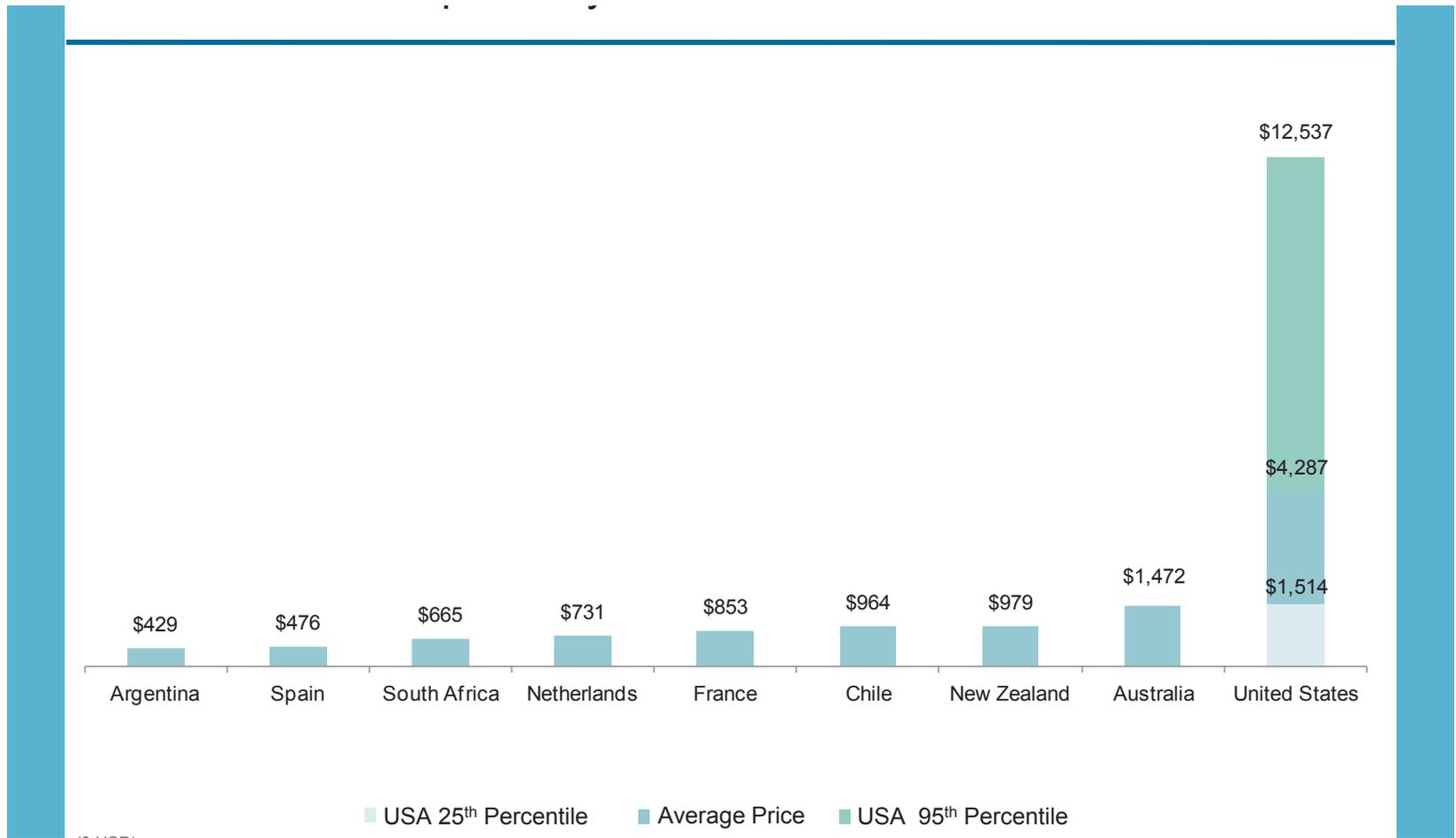
That is fairly typical: in Keene, N.H., Matt Meyer's colonoscopy was billed at \$7,563.56.

Maggie Christ of Chappaqua, N.Y., received \$9,142.84 in bills for the procedure. In

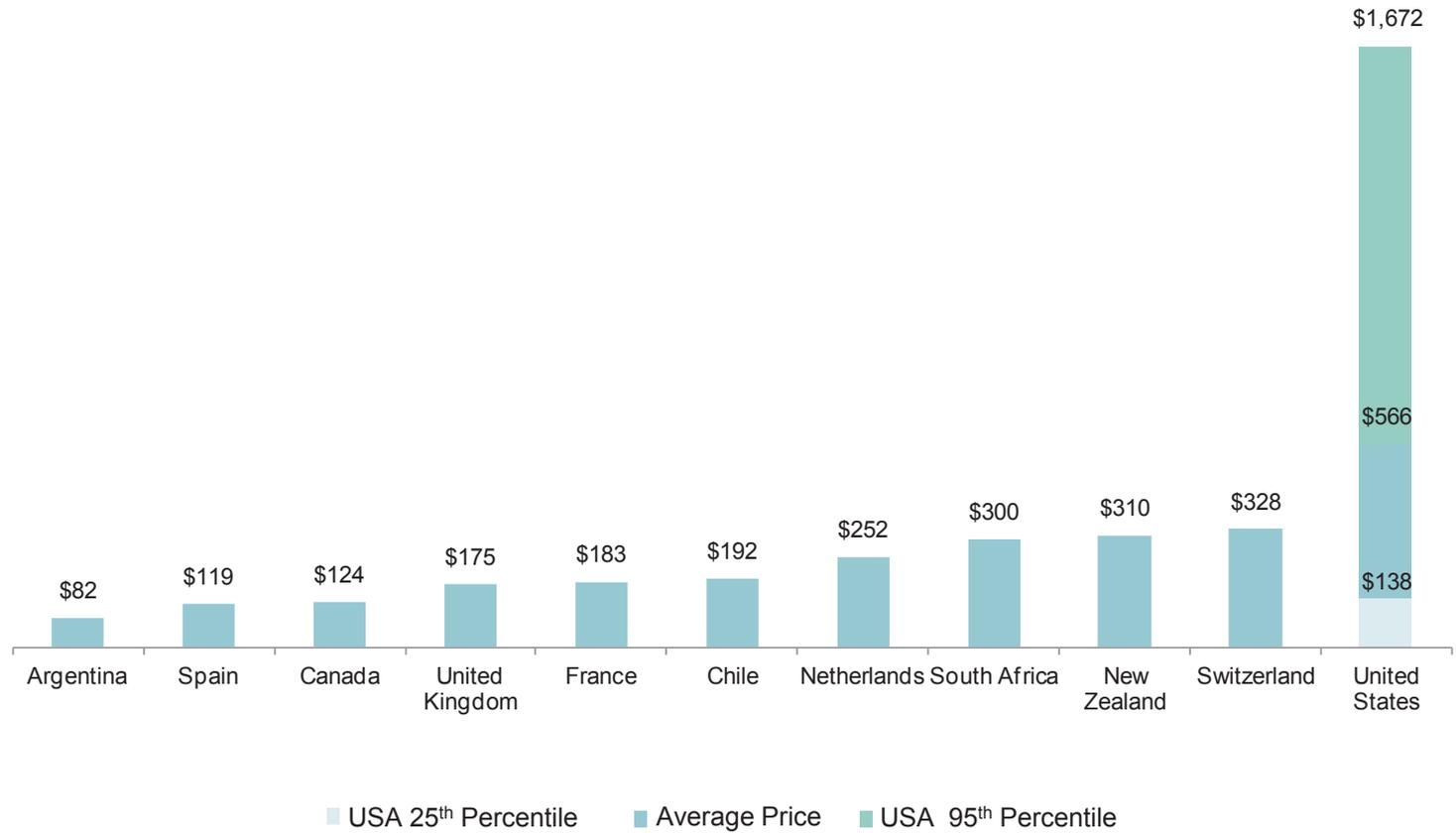
Durham, N.C., the charges for Curtiss Devereux came to \$19,438, which included a polyp removal. While their insurers negotiated down the price, the final tab for each test was more than \$3,500.

"Could that be right?" said Ms. Yapalater, stunned by charges on the statement on her dining room table. Although her insurer covered the procedure and she paid nothing, her

Cost of a hospital day



CT of head



Huge Response!

- What is the impact of medical costs on you or your family?
- **2002 READER RESPONSES**
- All
- Insured
- Uninsured
- Age 50 and Over
- **Anonymous** S.E. Michigan Insured 5 months ago
Total health care in my area has been buying up doctor's private practices. My chiropractor now orders many more tests, hired more staff including a should be retired doctor to do a physical exam. Plain padding the bill.
- **Anonymous** CA Insured 5 months ago
Anthem Blue Cross coverage left me with \$3900.00 charges for my first colonoscopy and does NOT cover any sedation charges, as they feel the procedure doesn't require any.
- **Anonymous** Virginia Insured 5 months ago
High premiums decrease our spending on other products and services. We save more as a supplemental hedge against a major medical emergency than we would otherwise.