



## General Hospital's Pricing Resembles an Egyptian Bazaar

According to a *Sunday News* "In my opinion" article, Amish shop operator S. S. Stoltzfus states that "... in the past, many folks with large hospital bills, especially those with hospital insurance plans, would meet with the hospital bookkeepers and offer a cash payment; most always the settlement would be 50 to 60 percent of the total bill." Stoltzfus observes "Why the big mark up in billings? Doesn't seem like good business."

"Good business" it may well be. The question is whether it is 'fair business.'

It would appear that one of the reasons is to over charge those of us with co-pay hospital insurance, an observation *NewsLanc* has made in the past. If the invoice ("Costs") amounts to \$10,000 and the policy calls for the health insurance provider to pay 80% (\$8,000) and the individual to pay 20% (\$2,000), the insurer receives a 40% to 50% discount on its share and pays say \$5,500 instead of \$8,000. But the individual is required to pay 100% of his or her share, which amounts to \$2,000.

So the so called "Costs" are not shared 80 / 20. In all likelihood, the ratio is 65 / 35 and the individual is

paying about \$700 too much. (Other hospitals do the same.)

***NewsLanc* does not seek to impugn the integrity of the managers of LGH. We recognize they are not running an ordinary business. Rather, there are valid social and pragmatic issues to be considered. On the other hand, we don't think LGH should be pricing like a used car dealer!**

*NewsLanc* maintains that LGH, a public and not-for-profit institution, should provide greater transparency concerning its policies and practices and encourage greater public input and overview pertaining to how it operates and what it does with its earnings.

It would be suitable for LGH to contribute more to public clinics and other public health efforts.

It might also provide additional funding for regional charities and make donations to the enhancement of public services such as the local libraries and schools systems. LGH's contributions might be somewhat guided by their beneficial impact on public health.

## Letter: "Competition is a good thing."

Your reports on LGH have been informative and enlightening. They are obviously well researched, and your expert very adept at evaluation.

While it is certainly a plus for Lancaster to have a premier hospital of the caliber of Lancaster General, it is not a good thing to drive the other Lancaster hospitals out of business. Competition is a good

thing. Having a competitor keeps an institution striving to do its best...

If your expert is correct, and the Heart of Lancaster hospitals do cease operations, Lancaster will be the poorer for it – even if LGH is all the richer.

## WATCHDOG:

**NEW ERA:** According to an August 11 article: *“The Lancaster Public Library, 125 N. Duke St., has seen a 15 percent increase in patronage from January to June as compared with last year during the same months. It saw between 1,500 and 1,700 people walk through its doors on a typical July day, up from 1,000 per day last July.”*

**WATCHDOG:** We are glad the *New Era* pointed out the ever growing importance of libraries, and especially the immense service the downtown Lancaster Public Library provides to the public. The Duke Street library has as many patrons in a day as many large city libraries that

are several times its size. And Lancaster libraries are without the large government subsidies typical elsewhere.

Guess what local item in the State budget did not get funded this year? If you said funds for renovation and expansion of the Duke Street library, you were right. **\$170 million plus for a convention center but not a cent for a library that serves about 1,500 people from throughout the county each day! Go figure.**

*(Full disclosure: NewsLanc’s publisher has a family member associated with the Duke Street library.)*

## Libraries: Pros and Cons

**LETTER:** *“I was kind of surprised to see your support of library funding. Those supposed 1,500 patrons are merely homeless people escaping the heat! It won’t be long until those libraries that you want funding for are turned into museums where school children will hear how people foolish continued funding an institution whose usefulness was long past.*

*“he Internet and its resources are where funding should be directed. Start a daytime homeless shelter instead of spending money and then calling it a library...”*

**RESPONSE:** You are correct that the homeless are a problem. Efforts will be made soon to work with the City, St. James (which attracts them with their breakfast problem), and Water Street Mission to try to accommodate their needs elsewhere, as is needed and you properly suggest. However, they make up a tiny portion of visitors, amounting to perhaps a dozen out of the 1,500 daily patrons. Just stop by and you will see for yourself.

As for the Internet age, the Duke Street library has expanded its number of computers by 50% this year and will add still more in the months to come, some for the children’s department. (This was made possible through a donation from a private party.)

**Libraries are no longer just a repository of books to be checked out. They provide a variety of educational materials on CD’s and DVD’s and are destinations for parents with children, teenagers, and retirees. They also serve business people, professionals, students and scholars, especially because of their sophisticated software.**

Furthermore, they conduct valuable educational programs directed at children, parents, teaching computer skills and English, amongst others.

They are busier than ever, and unlike Lancaster, other communities are investing heavily in them.

## WATCHDOG

**INTELLIGENCER JOURNAL:** The *Intell* carried an extensive op-ed entitled “A wrongful prosecution” by attorney Ira Wagler suggesting prosecutorial excess on the part Attorney General Tom Corbett’s office in regards to the prosecution and conviction of Levi Stoltzfoos.

**WATCHDOG:** Kudos to the *Intell* for publishing the column. As we have seen nationally and on the local level,

too often law enforcement officials lose sight of the object of the law and seek convictions, no matter what harm they are doing to the individual and the spirit of the law. They want to build a record or win the favor of powerful forces.

The Levi Stoltzfoos conviction and sentencing seems to be such a case.

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