

MEDICAL BARGAIN

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A famous patient of Len Maholick's has made the news twice recently, first in *Newsweek* magazine of January 22, and more recently in the Sunday magazine supplement of the Atlanta papers. *Newsweek* quoted the case history of the 28-year-old woman cured by 32 psychiatric consultations over an 8-month period at a cost to the patient of \$500. It contrasted 17 previous years of ordinary medical treatment at a total cost of \$2,700, which included 602 visits to 22 doctors and 1 chiropractor, 33 different kinds of medication, 600 allergy tests, 1,500 injections and 5 hospitalizations.

With our hats off to the investigative scut-work that was able to ferret out and itemize such a volume of facts and figures, we scurried for our own pencil and paper and came up with the following additional statistical information:

Prior to her \$500 psychiatric bill (which she ran up in just 3/4 of a year) the patient's average medical bill per year was \$158.82. This sum took care of over 35 office visits, 2 new and different medications, 35 allergy tests and 88 injections during each 12-month period. The average cost per office visit, including one allergy test and at least 2 injections each time, was \$4.56. Although we don't quite know how to work them in, about every three years the young lady was also able to enjoy a bonus of an unspecified number of in-patient hospital days, at a cost included in her yearly outlay.

While we applaud the quick triumph of psychiatry at \$15.62 per session, we are forced to observe that, over the long haul, the young lady reached the couch in remarkably good shape financially. Now that she has been cured and dismissed, we wish her Godspeed and hope that her next 17 years, with the doctors, chiropractors and psychiatrists all behind her, will be as blessed with successful bargain hunting in other fields as were her first in medicine.