Bending the Value Curve

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In health care policy circles, “bending the cost curve down” may qualify as the phrase of the decade. More than 1 million web search references are testament to its widespread use, intended to express a focus on reducing health care costs. Yet it should not surprise anyone familiar with technocratic vocabulary that there is no clear agreement on what the phrase means. Nonetheless, with health care spending nearing one-fifth of the nation’s gross domestic product, the nationwide clamor to “bend the cost curve down” is understandable. In this commentary, however, we discuss the shortfalls of focusing on costs alone and instead propose a national commitment to “bending the value curve up.”

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Authors: Evan Fieldston, Jennifer Jonas