

DOW JONES

↓ 86.11 to 23,909.84

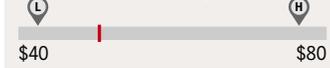
Over the past year:



CRUDE OIL

↓ \$1.08 to \$50.51

Over the past year:



Key:

○ — Past year's low ○ — Past year's high

Close; color indicates up/down from previous close

WEAKNESS IN CHINA WEIGHS ON STOCKS

Stocks took small losses Monday after China reported a drop in exports in December. The market didn't come close to matching the plunges it took in the last few months.

Major indexes fell about 1 percent in early trading but soon recovered much of what they'd lost. Tech companies slumped.

Drugmakers fell after Democrats in the House of Representatives announced an investigation into prescription drug pricing.

China's exports slipped in December, and exports to the United States fell 3.5 percent as rising tariffs and broader weakness affected the world's second-largest economy. Concerns about the Chinese economy and the overall global economy were a major contributor to the market's plunge in late 2018.

Mark Esposito, president of Esposito Securities, said the calm market reaction Monday was "a very positive sign . . . we may have found a bottom. People lose faith and hope when [the market] drops 20 percent in a very short period like it did."

On Monday the S&P 500 fell 0.5 percent to 2,582.61. The Dow Jones Industrial Average finished with a loss of 86.11 points, at 23,909.84. The Nasdaq composite retreated 0.9 percent to 6,905.92. The Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks shed 1 percent, closing at 1,432.81. — AP

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Hospital prices online

New requirement on services seen as incomplete step

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Hospitals on Long Island and around the country have been required since Jan. 1 to post online what they charge for their services, ranging from bladder examinations to ventricular shunt procedures.

The new federal requirement is a good but incomplete first step toward helping patients understand the high cost of services, health care and hospital experts said. The required listed prices, they said, aren't all that insightful because patients rarely pay those full prices.

Health systems also offer patients information assistance that's more realistic than the required list prices, experts said.

"Health care price transparency can potentially be useful, because it will shine a light on the high price of health care," said Larry Levitt, a senior vice president at the Kaiser Family Foundation, a nonprofit that focuses on health care policy. But the new requirement alone is "not going to be helpful for consumers to use as a guide to shop around, because there is a difference between the list prices and the prices insurers negotiate with health systems. The negotiated price matters. The listed price doesn't tell consumers very much."

Most patients also often don't know detailed aspects of their procedure, which makes it difficult to know what a final cost would be, said Brian Fullerton, director of revenue cycle at Stony Brook Medicine. Various health systems also use different formats — which can be hard for patients to interpret — in their lists.

But Fullerton said patients are growing more interested in the cost of care, because "new benefit designs have shifted costs to the consumer."

"More people have high-deductible plans," he said. "A \$5,000-deductible plan is not small. It can be painful, and



North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset and such facilities everywhere must post their charges for services. But, experts say, these "sticker prices" won't reflect prices negotiated with insurance companies.

Billing transparency

Where to find pricing information for three of Long Island's largest medical centers:

Health system	Headquarters	Website
■ Catholic Health Services	Rockville Centre	https://bit.ly/2RMqTdf
■ Northwell Health	New Hyde Park	https://bit.ly/2Hfd43s
■ Stony Brook Medicine	Stony Brook	https://bit.ly/2D8vS0e

people notice."

Still, even the uninsured won't pay the list prices, experts said.

The list price is "even less relevant in New York State, where hospitals offer a reduction for those without insurance," said Elisabeth Wynn, executive vice president, health economics and finance, for the Greater New York Hospital Association, which represents hospitals in the New York metro area, including Long Island.

New Hyde Park-based Northwell Health, the largest private employer in the state, with 68,000 workers, has an expense calculator on its site

that estimates costs based on a patient's insurance.

"It's more useful than simply posting list prices," said Richard Miller, executive vice president and chief business strategy officer at Northwell. "But it's really only an estimate because of the uniqueness of insurance coverage. We recommend people call one of our counselors. They'll get a human being to talk to, and it will be more fruitful than any online tool."

Other health insurers offer similar services. NYU Langone, like many hospitals, has financial counselors who help patients understand bills. The Manhattan-based

group also offers financial assistance programs. Higher deductibles and copays have led to more financial assistance requests, a NYU-Langone spokeswoman said.

Stony Brook University Hospital has counselors and also offers a financial-assistance program, Fullerton said.

Catholic Health Services also has financial counselors who help a patient navigate the cost of health care. CHS added everyone receives care at their facilities.

"Regardless of their ability to pay, CHS will not deny patients access to medically necessary hospital services," said Meredith Simonetti, Catholic Health Services' vice president for revenue cycle services.

As for the list price of an inpatient ventricular shunt procedure at Long Island Jewish Hospital? It's \$17,656. The actual cost of the procedure can vary greatly depending on a patient's insurance.