

Maternal and Newborn Cost in Alberta

120 Day total cost for in-hospital singleton births in 2009

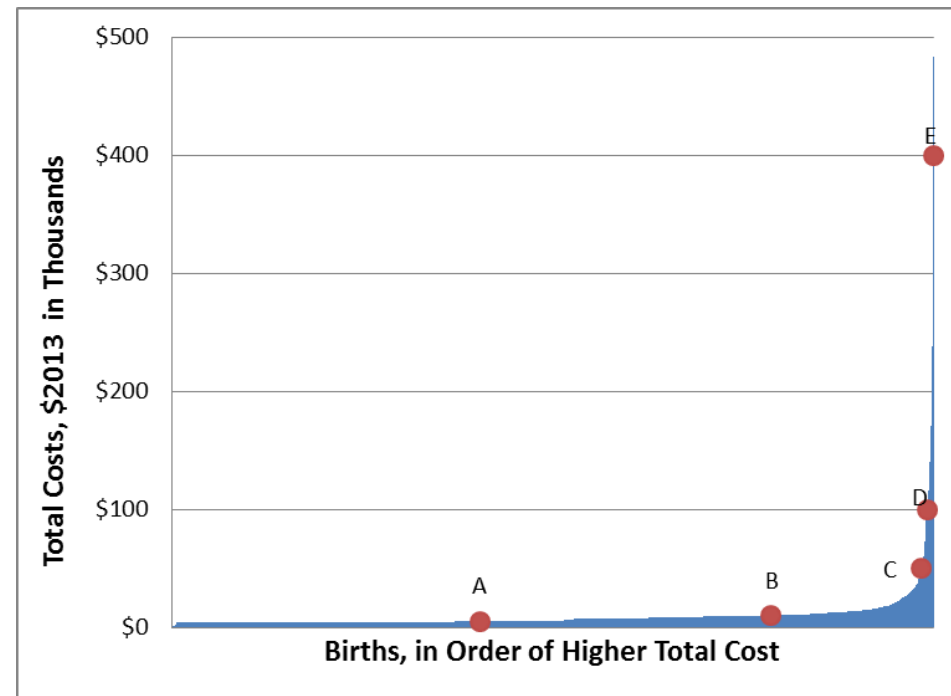
In December 2013, a Saskatchewan resident gave birth while on vacation in Hawaii. The hospital bill totaled approximately \$950,000 USD. As a comparative analysis, a cohort of live singleton in-hospital births from 2009 was created. The total inpatient, ambulatory and physician services costs for the cohort were totaled from 60 days prior to and 60 days after delivery, and adjusted to 2013 dollars. The components of the cost of the baby delivered in Hawaii that can be compared to Alberta data are: the six weeks bed rest for the mother (\$161,000), two months of NICU care (\$600,000) and specialist care (\$57,000) so that the total for comparison is \$668,000 USD¹. A similar situation in Alberta would cost \$484,000 CAD, making the cost of delivery in the USA roughly 1.4 times the cost of delivery in Alberta. This is consistent with research findings that the inpatient price level is approximately 1.45 times greater in the United States.²

Average direct cost of in-hospital singleton birth is \$9,700

The mean and median cost for delivery of a baby in Alberta are \$9,700 and \$5,600, respectively. This is a familiar pattern for health costing, where a small proportion of cases are more expensive. The top five per cent of the most expensive cases account for 29.7 per cent of total costs. The chart contains typical cases at five cost levels, shown as red points.

Description of the typical case:

- A. \$5,000 – Vaginal delivery. Average total length of stay (LOS) of 1 day.
- B. \$10,000 – Caesarean section. Average NICU stay of 1 day and total LOS of 3 days.
- C. \$50,000 – Preterm birth, low birth weight, respiratory distress. Average NICU stay of 19 days and total LOS 27 days
- D. \$100,000. Preterm birth, low birth weight, respiratory distress, apnoea. Average NICU stay of 25 days and total LOS 52 days.
- E. \$400,000. Preterm birth, extreme low birth weight, respiratory distress, apnoea, congenital malformations. Average NICU stay 17 days, total LOS 72 days.



¹ Humboldt Journal November 27, 2014. <http://www.humboldtjournal.ca/meet-the-most-expensive-baby-in-humboldt-1.1627180>

² Koechlin, F., L. Lorenzoni and P. Schreyer (2010), "Comparing Price Levels of Hospital Services Across Countries: Results of Pilot Study", OECD Health Working Papers, No. 53, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5km91p4f3rzw-en>