

MISSOURI LAWYERS WEEKLY

■ Court approves BJC settlement



Attorney Don Downing talks with Victoria Pennington, one of the plaintiffs in the class action lawsuit against BJC, prior to the start of the hearing on Sept. 3, before Judge David Dowd. Photo by Karen Elshout

ST. LOUIS - Hundreds of thousands of patients could see their outstanding medical bills start to fall under a settlement agreement that now has the final stamp of approval in St. Louis Circuit Court.

BJC Health System and attorneys for uninsured patients reached an agreement earlier this year, and it won preliminary approval from the court in March.

The lawsuit alleged that the uninsured were charged as much as two to five times more than those with private or government insurance for the same care. Under the settlement,

uninsured patients who were treated at any of several BJC hospitals in Missouri and Illinois can seek refunds or have their pending medical bills reduced.

Plaintiffs' attorneys estimated that the agreement could affect at least 385,000 people. BJC reported that bill forgiveness is expected to be more than \$167 million, and future bills could be lowered to the tune of another \$100 million.

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