

Health bills to 'nudge' insurance coverage

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Cancer patients could find it easier to participate in clinical trials and people with bad backs could get insurance coverage for chiropractic treatments under a series of bills moving through the state Senate.

The bills, endorsed by the Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Retirement on Wednesday, are the first of an expected host of legislation regarding various health insurance reforms.

SB1059 would require insurers to pay for hospitalization and lab work associated with clinical trials for cancer treatments. Drugs and research would still be paid for by the company or hospital operating the trials.

Sen. Ann Day, D-Tucson, said

some cancer patients are being kept out of trials because their insurance companies won't cover the same services they pay for in other instances.

"Sometimes insurance companies need a nudge and this is when we do," she said.

SB1031 would force health maintenance organizations to pay for at least three chiropractic visits for diagnosis and treatment of injuries.

Alan Immerman, a Paradise Valley chiropractor, said the bill would put his practice on the same terms with insurance companies as medical doctors.

"We have had a constant effort to destroy our profession," he said.

But Jim Norton, a lobbyist for Pacificare, said the state should not create a different set of rules for one specialty provider.