



March 2005

ASMP NEWSLETTER

Report Fraud, Waste & Abuse Call Toll-free 1-866-726-2916

\$13 for every \$1—not a bad investment



Fraud Recovery Reaps Big Returns

The Economic and Social Research Institute issued a report that indicates that over the last five years, \$5.7 billion dollars has been recovered by the government from health care fraud cases.

Such fraud includes illegal kickbacks to physicians and over-billing by hospitals.

The report states that the government is collecting \$13 for every dollar it spends on fighting fraud.

Programs like the ASMP and similar programs in other states have contributed to the government's success rate.

Know Someone Who is New to Medicare?

All new Medicare enrollees are eligible to receive a **FREE** *Welcome to Medicare* physical exam within the first six months of becoming eligible. To take advantage of this offer, contact your physician and request an Initial Physical Preventive Physician Examination.

Please note: Although the exam is free; lab tests, if ordered, are considered as non-covered items and will be charged to the patient or the patient's co-insurance.

TIP: Never give your Medicare, Medicaid, or Social Security number to strangers or in exchange for "free" medical equipment or any other "free" offer. Treat it like a credit card.

Is it covered, or not?

Deciding what Medicare will pay for Diabetes can be confusing. Here is a simple breakdown:

Monitors: Medicare covers blood glucose monitors for people with Type I or Type II diabetes.

Insulin Requiring: If the diabetes is treated with insulin, Medicare covers 100 test strips and 100 lancets *every month*.

No Insulin Required: If the diabetic does not require insulin, Medicare covers 100 test strips and 100 lancets *every 3 months*.

Want to Learn More About Medicare?

Dear Marci, is a free, weekly e-newsletter designed to keep you in the loop about health care benefits, rights and options for older Americans and people with disabilities. If you would like to sign up to receive this free e-newsletter, please do the following:

- Send an email to dearmarci@medicarerights.org and put the words "subscribe consumer" in the subject line.

Kentucky Seniors Saving Medicare: A sister organization making a difference

"They kept saying 'Did you get the bill?' Just because I didn't get the bill, it doesn't make it right. Somebody's getting the bill." Quote from Elizabeth Sypolt

Elizabeth Sypolt has never been to North Wells, Pa., but a doctor there billed Medicare for her treatment. Sypolt's Medicare account also was billed for doctors' visits she never made in Bryn Mawr, Pa., and New York City.

The mistakes have made Sypolt, a retired nurse in Boone County, a watchdog over her Medicare charges. She's teaching others to scrutinize those billing statements, too. Sypolt is part of a volunteer group called Kentucky Seniors Saving Medicare (a program similar to our ASMP).

Sometimes a doctor's billing staff will make mistakes when translating the chart from medical terms to billing codes. Sypolt thinks that's what happened when her local doctor's office billed Medicare for a mammogram, which she had and a sonogram, which she didn't have. The sonogram charge was about \$230.

She called the doctor's billing office and then called back a month later to make sure it had been taken care of. "They hadn't even looked into it. They said they had been very busy," Sypolt said. "The third month I called again and they said someone had gotten married." Finally she reported the problem to Medicare.

The people in the doctor's billing office kept asking why she was so concerned. "They kept saying 'Did you get the bill?' Just because I didn't get the bill it doesn't make it right. Somebody's getting the bill," said Sypolt.



How do you like this logo? AoA & a committee of SMP stakeholders are working on a new, national “branding” for the projects, complete with this logo.

ASMP AND OTHER PROGRAM

In 2003, the Administration on Aging (AoA) was allocated \$3.25 million in HCFAC funds to support the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Projects, and to maintain effective partnerships for detecting and reporting error, fraud and abuse. AoA provided technical assistance and support to the 57 SMP projects, and national community education efforts, with a particular focus on vulnerable populations, persons with low health literacy, culturally diverse backgrounds and persons living in rural areas. The SMP projects provided direct and widespread education to older Americans through an extensive network of senior volunteers, designed to increase recognition and reporting of potential errors and fraud in the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

There are 57 projects in 50 states plus

the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. SMP projects recruit and train retired individuals to educate seniors in their communities about how they can help prevent and detect potential Medicare and Medicaid error, fraud, and abuse. To date, the projects have trained approximately 45,000 senior volunteers who directly educated 1.5 million Medicare beneficiaries and recovered over \$105 million for Medicare and other programs in their communities through training sessions and one-on-one encounters. This training included how to read the Medicare Summary Notices, fraud awareness, and working with medical providers when potential errors are discovered among other topics. As a result, the number of beneficiaries who read their Medicare Summary Notices (MSN) increased by 21.4%. After SMP training, over 90% of beneficiaries indicated they would be willing to call their provider to discuss an error on their MSN.

Steps to Take When You Suspect Fraud:

1. Contact the provider (doctor, hospital, and clinic) and ask them to check the billing—most providers are honest and it could just be a mistake.

OR

2. Contact your local ASMP Volunteer Counselor or call the ASMP Hotline toll-free at 1-866-726-2916 and provide the details of the problem, if you are uncomfortable contacting your provider or you still have problems. If the ASMP Volunteer Counselor is unable to resolve the situation, a written complaint will be completed and forwarded to the appropriate agency for fraud and abuse investigation.

Upcoming Community Presentations by ARVAC Volunteers, in the west central area of Arkansas:

March 3

Dardanelle Senior Citizens Center

Danville Senior Citizens Center

March 10

March 4

Russellville Jackson Apts.

Mt. Ida Senior Citizens Center

March 16

March 8

Perryville Masonic Lodge

Volunteer Training Dates: Coming to a City near You!

El Dorado:

Hosted by the Texarkana RSVP will be an ASMP training program on March 15 and 16 in El Dorado. Please meet in the AHEC-UAMS on 460 West Oak Street, El Dorado. Meeting will be held in the Betty White Center Meeting Room (7C). Call Ermer Pondexter at 870-779-4983 to register.

Ft. Smith:

The WestArk RSVP will host an ASMP training program at the RSVP Offices located at 401 North 13th Street, Ft. Smith. There is a two day prerequisite training which will be scheduled prior to the ASMP training on April 7th. Call Susie Reehl at 479-783-4155 to register.

Harrison:

The Northwest Arkansas AAA is planning on hosting an ASMP training program sometime in March. Please contact CD Gunselman at 870-741-1144 for dates and location.

Helena:

The Mid-Delta Community Services will be hosting an ASMP training program on May 5-6 in Helena. Please contact Lauraine Calhoun at 870-338-6406 for details.

Arkansas Senior Medicare Medicaid Patrol

FRAUD TIPS:

- Treat your Medicare card as if it were a credit card. When you think about it—it's like a credit card to the U.S. Treasury!
- Medicare does not contact beneficiaries by telephone or door-to-door with special offers. If you are solicited with a "special offer from Medicare" it is always from an independent agent, so buyers beware!
- Never sign a blank form.
- Never accept medical supplies or equipment from a door-to-door salesperson, or someone calling you unsolicited on the telephone.

Fraud Cases in the News

"Medicare settles a fraud charge against Tenet, a for-profit hospital chain, for \$54 million."

Hospital Fraud: The Catskill Regional Medical Center of New York has agreed to pay \$1.5 million in an illegal patient referral scheme.

Payor Fraud: A St. Louis Kansas Blue Cross Blue Shield claims processor was charged with falsifying medical records to receive productivity bonuses she would not otherwise have been entitled to.

Physical Therapy Fraud: A Houston Texas owner of three physical therapy clinics was ordered to pay \$964,239 in kickback fees. The owner was paying a 10% referral fee to physicians for sending patients to her clinics. The investigation also revealed the owner guilty of billing for PT evaluations that were not performed by a physician, and using unlicensed technicians.

Home Health Service Fraud: The Prestige Home Care Agency of Philadelphia will pay \$1.4 million to settle a false claims act charge of illegal billing. The agency knowingly sent unqualified workers to patient's homes to provide home health care.

Physician Fraud: Four cardiologists from the Redding Medical Center of California (Tenet Healthcare) will pay \$24 million to patients for performing unnecessary cardiac catheterizations and open heart surgeries and an additional \$11.9 million to the MediCal (state Medicaid) program. Tenet also paid \$54 million to settle fraud billing brought by Medicare, and an additional \$11.9 million to the MediCal (state Medicaid) program.

Action in Arkansas:

\$ Recovered, At Last!

Mr. C, a beneficiary who checked his MSN, reported that a medical supply company was billing for a much more expensive product than they were providing him. After ASMP reported this to Medicare, they recovered \$750 from the provider, but it took a year of follow-up by Mr. C and ASMP.

Saving For The Beneficiary!

A dedicated case manager with North West AAA reported that a hospital had billed a beneficiary over \$900 for “medication administration and medications” for an outpatient procedure, even though he had taken his regular medications with him to the hospital, as directed by his physician. After several calls by ASMP, the hospital removed these charges from the beneficiary’s bill.

Suspicious Activity!

A Little Rock physician’s office with a sharp nurse spotted suspicious behavior by a medical supply company, noticing that as many as 18 certificates of medical necessity forms were being faxed to their office for one patient in a short period of time. When the patient was contacted, she reported that she was receiving medical supplies from this company that she had never requested. The physician knew about the Senior Medicare Patrol through one of our Advisory Council Members and suggested the nurse contact us. Medicare has recovered almost \$1600 for one patient. The nurse has since reported two more similar cases, which ASMP is currently working to resolve.

Not What The Beneficiary Ordered (Or Medicare Paid For)!

Mrs. B reported that after she contacted an advertised company about a lift chair, they subsequently delivered a broken, worn wheelchair, with missing parts. In addition, it was so large it would not fit through doors in the woman’s home. She had complained to this company for eight months with no action, before she contacted ASMP for help, who is working to get the wheelchair picked up and all charges refunded.

Fast Service – Not!

An electric wheelchair delivered to Mrs. J’s home by a medical supply company did not meet her needs, and a family member of Mrs. J immediately requested that the company pick the chair up, which they did.....six months later. Medicare had paid almost \$4,800 and Mrs. J’s supplemental insurance about \$1,200. Mrs. J was concerned that the money would not be refunded, because of the company’s delay in picking the chair up. As a result of seeing one of the project’s PSAs, our hotline was called. Medicare has been refunded their payments, and ASMP is now awaiting information about the supplemental insurance refund.

What Question?

And last, a bit of humor we can all relate to. A caller to the hotline said he had just come from a wonderful presentation by one of our volunteers on the Fraud project and the new Medicare discount drug card, and he had a question. Except he couldn't remember the question! When you have a question about healthcare fraud, waste or abuse, please call your local ASMP partner or our toll-free hotline, and we will help you find the answer!!

REGIONAL PARTNERS



Today, ASMP has seven regional partners. Our regional partners work directly with ASMP volunteers in their hometown. Let's meet our partners:

TEXARKANA RSVP

Ermer Pondexter & Dan Dupree
3rd & Walnut Streets, PO Box 2711
Texarkana, AR-TX 75504
870-779-4983

pondexter@txkusa.org Or ddupree@txkusa.org

Ermer Pondexter.... "The project has conducted several group presentations and seniors are very excited about sharing of fraud information with other in their community".

Mid-Delta Community Services, Inc.

Margaret Staub
PO Box 145
610 S. Biscoe Street
Helena, AR 72342
870-338-6406

mmstaub@cox-internet.com

Margaret Staub.... "We are delighted to be the newest partner. Thank you to our volunteers – light is the task where many share the toil".

Jefferson County RSVP

Phyllis Curlin
211 West 3rd Avenue, Suite 125
Pine Bluff, AR 71601
870-534-2156

Phyllis_curlin@pbreynoldscenter.org

Phyllis Curlin... "Our SMP volunteers have been very pleased at the attentiveness of the audiences. The beneficiary's response is what keeps the volunteers going".

CARELINK

Judy Hoelzeman
Central Arkansas AAA
700 Riverfront Drive
PO Box 5988
North Little Rock, AR 72114-5988
501-688-7426
judyh@care-link.org

Judy Hoelzeman... "With the help of one of our community partners, The Catholic Diocese of Little Rock, we are working to get the message out to the Spanish-speaking population of Arkansas."

AAA of Northwest Arkansas

CD Gunselman
1510 Rock Springs Rd.
P.O. Box 1795
Harrison, AR 72602-1795
870-741-1144
cdgunselman@aanwar.org

CD Gunselman...."We are getting the SMP message out in Northwest Arkansas through volunteers and the media and it is making a positive difference".

WestArk RSVP

Susan Reehl
401 North 13th Street
Ft. Smith, AR 72901
479-783-4155
rsvp@ipa.net

Susan Reehl...."WestArk RSVP Fraud Patrol members and proctors were trained at the RSVP Senior Computer Lab in how to use computers to assist Medicare recipients in choosing a drug card..."

ARVAC

Anna Via & Sue Bradford
PO Box 808
Dardanelle, AR 72834
479-229-4861
arvac@arvacinc.org

Sue Bradford....."We are happy to be part of this project. We had a great kick-off training on Jan 20 & 21 with 15 people getting certificates."



ASMP Volunteer Profile

Ron Newport

Carelink

Ron Newport was born in Indianapolis during the depression. Jobs were very hard to find, and his family moved back to the family farm in the mountains of Southern Kentucky. “They were hills, really,” says Ron. He grew up there, while his dad first did sharecropping, and later owned a farm. Ron attended one-room school houses through the 8th grade, and moved often.

After a career as an executive in management, marketing, and teaching at the University level, Ron and his wife, Dorothy, retired to Arkansas from Missouri in 1997. “Dorothy’s family lives here and we’ve always been close to her brother,” Ron says of settling down in Arkansas. He also has a married daughter and two grandchildren living in Loveland, Colorado.

Ron says he volunteered for the Medicare Fraud program because it’s something he felt that he could do well. His earlier occupations prepared him by honing his organizational, thinking and presentation skills. “My favorite groups to speak to are church senior groups,” he said. “They’re always optimistic, lively and fun.” He says he enjoys their many intelligent questions and hearing their opinions.

Ron also shares his musical talents by playing bass fiddle at Jacksonville Senior Center music days and has become well known to seniors who attend these music fests. Ron says his funniest “Medicare moment” happened at McAlmont Senior Center. One of the women who knew him as a fiddler asked him if he played anything other than the bass fiddle. “I told her, yes, I love to play the blues.” Then a second woman (Ron says she was over 95), busy with her quilting, quietly asked, “You play the blues?” Ron happily answered, “Yes, ma’am, I really enjoy the old style traditional blues.” She looked up and said, “You goin’ to Hell,” then went right back to her quilting.

“I’ve been [volunteering] for about fifteen years, and I find that I’m slowing considerably each year,” Ron commented. That’s hard to imagine, since Ron recently completed a goal he set for himself: to reach 1000 people with the Medicare Fraud message! Ron volunteers, he says, because he feels best when he can give something back to the community, especially if it benefits older people.

Be Informed...Be Aware...Be Involved!

Dos & DON'Ts to Prevent Medicare & Medicaid Fraud

DO be cautious of any provider who maintains they have been endorsed by the federal government.

DON'T ever give out your Medicare number except to your doctor or other personal providers.

DO check your Medicare statement with your records to be sure it is correct.

DON'T contact your physician to request a service that you do not need because you were persuaded to do so by someone selling that service.

DO be careful of accepting medical services that are represented as FREE.

To Report Suspected Medicare or Medicaid Fraud

Call Toll-free 1-866-726-2916

ASMP Newsletter (self-mailer)



ASMP Newsletter
Department of Human Services
700 Main Street, Little Rock, AR 72203-1437
Phone: 866-726-2916
Website: www.state.ar.us/dhs/aging/asmp.html
E-mail: Sharon.Marcum@arkansas.gov

INSERT VOLUNTEER
LABEL HERE

Report Fraud, Waste & Abuse