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#3: Information for Providers, Physicians, Pharmacists and Their Staffs About Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage

MMA –Your Important Role

Note: This article was updated on February 26, 2013, to reflect current Web addresses. All other information remains unchanged.

Provider Types Affected

Medicare physicians, institutional providers, pharmacists, and any staff who have contact with Medicare beneficiaries

Provider Action Needed



STOP – Impact to You

On January 1, 2006, a new benefit will be available to the 41 million Americans who receive health insurance coverage through the Medicare program. Medicare Prescription Drug Plans will help reduce the cost of prescription drugs. Your patients may ask you about this new benefit.



CAUTION – What You Need to Know

We need your help to make sure Medicare patients know about and understand this new benefit. Information is just a click away. Through MLN Matters articles, we will give you access to various levels of information. You decide the level of involvement you want to have in helping Medicare patients.



GO – What You Need to Do

Stay informed; visit <http://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Prescription-Drug-Coverage/PrescriptionDrugCovGenIn/index.html> on CMS the website. This website includes links to all articles in this series and information providers need about the new coverage. At a minimum, refer your Medicare patients to 1-800- MEDICARE and <http://www.medicare.gov> on the web.

Disclaimer

This article was prepared as a service to the public and is not intended to grant rights or impose obligations. This article may contain references or links to statutes, regulations, or other policy materials. The information provided is only intended to be a general summary. It is not intended to take the place of either the written law or regulations. We encourage readers to review the specific statutes, regulations and other interpretive materials for a full and accurate statement of their contents.

Background

You and your staff are trusted sources of information for your patients. You may be the first source of information that Medicare beneficiaries use to explain Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage. Please encourage your Medicare patients to learn more about this new coverage because it may save them money on prescription drugs. **If a beneficiary fails to actively choose a prescription drug plan, they may miss out on cost savings for prescription drugs.**

Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage will:

- Help pay for prescriptions;
- Provide extra help for people with limited income and resources; and
- Cover brand name and generic drugs.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will include Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage details in the *2006 Medicare & You Handbook*, and send it to beneficiaries in October 2005.

Your Role and Involvement – You Choose

Your interest may range from wanting basic to detailed information on this coverage. For example, if you work in a rural locale, or in areas that serve a large population of beneficiaries with limited income and resources, you may have a greater interest in counseling your patients.

- **Basic** - You know that Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage exists and where to send people to learn about benefit details. You may display a poster (available later this spring) in your office or clinic, and make beneficiary-focused materials available in your office.
- **Intermediate** - You know more about Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage, such as:
 - How beneficiaries can enroll;
 - Co-payment amounts;
 - Where to find additional help for people with limited income and resources;
 - Where to find information on the following websites:
<http://www.medicare.gov>
<http://www.cms.gov/>
 - How to answer the basic questions.
- **Advanced** - You know detailed information about Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage and the plans available in your area. You, or someone on your staff, can answer detailed questions about the drug benefit. In some cases, you or your staff may counsel beneficiaries on their particular situation and the options that will work best for them.

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To Stay Updated on New Information and Educational Resources

- Pay attention to correspondence from your national professional associations—they are part of the information stream from CMS to the community of professionals who serve people with Medicare; sign up for their listservs and read their newsletters.
- Keep current with information from your Medicare fee-for-service claims processing contractor; bookmark their website, read their bulletins, and register to receive electronic listserv messages.
- Bookmark and visit the provider educational web page on Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage, <http://www.cms.gov/> on the CMS website.
- Register to receive listserv email messages to alert you when new *MLN Matters* articles have been released on the new drug benefit (and other Medicare information); register at https://list.nih.gov/cgi-bin/wa.exe?A0=mln_education_products-l on the CMS website.
- Participate in CMS Open Door Forums, to hear from and ask questions of CMS leadership on topics of interest to your particular provider type; for information about these forums visit <http://www.cms.gov/Outreach-and-Education/Outreach/OpenDoorForums/index.html> on the CMS website.

Get Your Staff Involved

In addition, inform members of your staff who interact with Medicare patients every day about the information in this article:

- Physicians – supply this information to nursing and front office staff.
- Hospitals - supply this information to nursing, discharge planning, financial, and emergency room staff.
- Pharmacists - supply this information to your pharmacy technicians and front counter staff.

If you or your staff are willing to further advise and counsel people with Medicare, CMS will have tools to help you do this at <http://www.cms.gov/> on the CMS website.

CMS has released the Toolkit for Health Care Professionals: Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage, available as an Adobe PDF file (860Kb) at <http://www.cms.gov/MLNProducts/downloads/provtoolkit.pdf> on the CMS website.

Summary

CMS asks you to:

- Respond to questions from your patients in a way that encourages them to seek more information from the Medicare Program;
- Inform members of your staff who interact with Medicare patients about the information resources available to them, and where they may refer patients to learn more about Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage; and
- At a minimum, refer your Medicare patients who are looking for information on Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage to 1-800-MEDICARE or <http://www.medicare.gov> on the web.

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