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### The Fourth in the Medlearn Matters Series of Articles on the Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage

#### *New Educational Products Available*

#### Provider Types Affected

Physicians, providers, suppliers, and their staff providing service to people with Medicare

#### Important Points to Remember

- On January 1, 2006, new prescription drug coverage will be available to your Medicare patients.
- You should encourage your Medicare patients to learn more about this new coverage because it may save them money on prescription drugs.
- If your Medicare patients ask you questions about the new coverage, you can refer them to 1-800-MEDICARE and to <http://www.medicare.gov> for additional information and assistance.

This article announces new educational resources available to assist Medicare beneficiaries in their understanding of the new Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage.

#### *Release of Notices to Medicare Beneficiaries Who Automatically Qualify for Extra Help*

Starting at the end of May through June, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is mailing notices to people who are automatically eligible for extra help paying for a Medicare prescription drug plan, including people with Medicare and Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, and Medicare Savings Program coverage.

The notices will let these people know that Medicare prescription drug coverage is coming and that they will get extra help without needing to apply for it. The notices can be viewed at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medicarereform/lir.asp> on the CMS web site.

This summer, the Social Security Administration (SSA) will mail a different letter to other people who do not automatically qualify for the extra help but may be potentially eligible for it. The letter will include an application that people can fill out and return to find out if they qualify for extra help paying for a Medicare prescription drug plan. This letter can viewed at <http://www.ssa.gov/organizations/medicareoutreach2/> on the Social Security Administration web site. Select "Application for Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs."

#### 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.

### *Posters - Now Available for Display*

Posters titled "Have Limited Income? Social Security Can Help with Prescription Costs" can be ordered free of charge on the CMS web site. The posters are suitable for display in a physician's, providers, or supplier's office; a pharmacy; or other health care setting where Medicare beneficiaries will see this information. The posters direct Medicare beneficiaries with limited income and resources to a toll free number where they can find out if they are eligible for help with prescription drug costs.

To view and order the posters, go to the Medlearn Prescription Drug Coverage web page located at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn/drugcoverage.asp> on the CMS web site. We need your help in getting this information out to Medicare beneficiaries with limited income and resources. We encourage you to order and display the posters where Medicare beneficiaries will see them.

### *Information Tool Available on Web*

The new prescription drug coverage informational tool, "Learn About Your Medicare Prescription Coverage Options" was recently released on <http://www.medicare.gov>. This awareness tool for people with Medicare provides information about what is coming and what actions they will need to take with regard to the new prescription drug coverage. By answering 2-3 questions, the individual will be provided with information such as: eligibility for extra help for people with limited income and resources, customized information based on the individual's current coverage, as well as educational resources and links to publications about the new drug coverage.

## Summary

CMS understands the pressure on your clinical time with patients, which is why we ask that you inform your Medicare patients that this new prescription drug coverage could be valuable to them and worth exploring. In addition to the products discussed in this article, CMS plans to provide you with access to information you could make available to your patients in your offices.

## Additional Information

More information on provider education and outreach regarding drug coverage can be found at: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn/drugcoverage.asp> on the CMS web site.

Detailed drug coverage information for CMS partners and beneficiary advocates can be found at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/partnerships/news/mma/default.asp> on the CMS web site.

You can also find additional information regarding prescription drug plans at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/pdps/> on the CMS web site.

Further information on CMS implementation of the MMA can be found at the following CMS web site: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medicarereform/>

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