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New Educational Products Available: The Fourth in the MLN Matters Series of Articles on the Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage

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.

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

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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 be viewed at <http://www.ssa.gov/organizations/medicareoutreach2> on the Social Security Administration website. Select "Application for Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs."

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 MLN Prescription Drug Coverage web page located at http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/23_drugcoverage.asp on the CMS website. 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 two or three 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

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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/MLNProducts/23_DrugCoverage.asp#TopOfPage on the CMS website.

Detailed drug coverage information for CMS partners and advocates for people with Medicare can be found at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/Partnerships/PDI/list.asp#TopOfPage> on the CMS website.

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

Further information on CMS implementation of the Medicare Modernization Act (MMA) can be found at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MMAUpdate/> on the CMS website.

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