

NMEP Case Study Sites Project— **Satisfaction with information about Medicare**

Purpose: This report examines the levels of satisfaction among beneficiaries about the information they have about Medicare and the usefulness of the sources of information they contacted. The data come from four waves of the NMEP Community Monitoring Survey, a telephone survey that was conducted annually with Medicare beneficiaries in six cities from 1998 to 2001. The survey asks questions about the sources and frequency of information used by beneficiaries, their satisfaction with the information, their knowledge of the Medicare program and plan options, circumstances that might trigger the need for certain kinds of Medicare information, and demographic issues. This study also examined beneficiary search outcomes in more detail by focusing on beneficiaries surveyed who reported seeking information about particular Medicare topics in the past twelve months, i.e., issues pertaining to claims/billing, supplemental insurance, and managed care.

Results: Key findings from this study are as follows:

- Overall, about 80 percent of all beneficiaries surveyed were satisfied or very satisfied with the stock of information they have about Medicare.
 - Only 1 percent said they were dissatisfied.
- About 37 percent of beneficiaries surveyed sought information on *at least* one of these topics—claims/billing issues, supplemental insurance issues, managed care issues—during the past year.
 - About a third reported seeking information on more than one of these topics.
- 77 percent of the beneficiaries who said they sought information on one or more of these topics in the past year were successful in finding a source for it.
 - About 90 percent of beneficiaries who found any source of information reported that their questions were answered.
 - There is also a clear trend over time of increasing success by beneficiaries in finding sources for their questions on these topics.
- CMS sources of information have also been increasingly useful to beneficiaries.

- In the 2001 survey, about one-third of beneficiaries seeking information on Medigap insurance issues turned to CMS sources, up from 11 percent two years before that.
- The number of beneficiaries that mentioned CMS as a source of information about managed care questions almost doubled every year since the survey was first conducted, and now stands at 17 percent of those with questions on this topic.
- Beneficiaries who are knowledgeable about Medicare are more satisfied with information and more likely to find sources of information and answers to their questions.
 - However, it is difficult to say whether those seeking and finding information learned more about Medicare, or whether those who knew more about Medicare were more likely to seek information and know where to look.
- A significant and identifiable minority of beneficiaries remains dissatisfied with their stock of Medicare information and, when they seek information, is less likely to get their questions answered.
 - These persons tend to have low levels of formal education, are less knowledgeable about Medicare, and were confronted with unusually difficult life events during the past year, especially financial hardship.
 - The eldest beneficiaries appear to be less satisfied than other beneficiaries.