

Happy New Year

The New Year brings about potential problems Medicare beneficiaries can have with the Part D plan. Problems can range from not receiving their card to incorrect co-payments charged by their pharmacy. The National Council on Aging has developed an [Early 2010 Part D Help Guide](#), which provides a quick reference of ways you can help your clients use their Part D plan in this year. This guide includes information about the CMS Best Available Evidence guidance, the transitional fill requirements and even the Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment Period.

H1N1 Vaccination

Although everyone is potentially at risk of contracting the H1N1 virus, the CDC has identified five priority groups who are at a greater risk: (1) pregnant women, (2) persons who live with or provide care for infants less than 6 months old, (3) health-care and emergency medical services personnel, (4) children and young adults aged 6 months through 24 years, and (5) persons aged 25 through 64 years who have medical conditions that put them at higher risk for influenza-related complications. Wondering if Medicare will pay for the H1N1 vaccination? Check out the CMS fact sheet [Medicare Coverage of the H1N1 Vaccine](#) for more information.

Health Access introduces a [new website to help patients with their hospital bills](#).

Typically, an uninsured or underinsured person who goes to a hospital is charged 3-5 times more than a big insurer would pay for exactly the same care. California's [Hospital Fair Pricing Act of 2006](#) limits the amount hospitals in California can charge state residents who are either uninsured or underinsured and have high medical costs, and whose income is not higher than 3.5 times the Federal Poverty Level. The Fair Pricing Act prohibits hospitals from charging eligible patients more for care than they could charge Medicare. In most cases, this will be 65-85% less than the non-discounted price.

Medicare Fraud

Recently the Associated Press reported on how the Senior Medicare Patrol helps Medicare fight fraud. HICAP counselors help Medicare by reporting suspected fraud to the Senior Medicare Patrol and reminds Beneficiaries to protect their personal information. See what the AP had to say in their article [Senior-citizen volunteers fight Medicare fraud](#).

You're the Counselor:

Frances received notice that her Part D plan no longer covers her medications. Is there anything she can do???

(Send your ideas to ask-hicap@inlandagency.org and we will share your counseling tips in the next issue)