

Medicare Issues Sanction Notice to Aetna Insurance Company

On April 5, 2010, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a [notice](#) to Aetna Insurance Company of its intent to impose an intermediate sanction to ensure that Medicare beneficiaries continue to have access to prescription drugs under Medicare's requirements. The [intermediate sanction](#), which prevents Aetna from marketing and enrolling new beneficiaries, went into effect on April 21, 2010 and will remain until Aetna demonstrates to CMS that it has corrected its deficiencies and that they are not likely to recur. Medicare's actions should not impact the approximately one million enrollees in the Aetna plans across the country.

Medicare's Website Gets an Upgrade

On Monday April 12, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) posted a new and easier to use version of [Medicare.gov](#), the Medicare consumer-focused web site. The updated web site is part of the steps Medicare is taking to make using [Medicare.gov](#) easier for seniors, and people who care for them, to find the information they need about Medicare. The new design was focus tested with seniors, caregivers and operators at 1-800-MEDICARE. The new design gives Medicare more flexibility to quickly update information that is important to users. Take a tour of the new [online](#) face of Medicare today.

Medicare Opt-Out Provider Listing

Ever wonder how to check and see which providers have opted out of Medicare? Palmetto GBA, who administers Medicare health insurance for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services for California, [lists](#) those Part B providers who have fulfilled the requirements necessary for private contracts with Medicare beneficiaries. Participating physicians must first terminate their Medicare Part B participation agreement thus choosing to [opt-out of Medicare](#). Participating providers are only permitted to opt out at the beginning of each calendar quarter and the Opt-Out contract is for a two year period. After the two year period is over, the provider could elect to return to Medicare or to "opt out" again. View the opt out listing [here](#).

Webchat on Health Reform and Seniors

Education efforts are rolling out to help Americans understand the new health reform law. On April 8, 2010, Kathleen Sebelius, secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, and Kathy Greenlee, assistant secretary for aging, hosted a [Webchat](#) on health reform and seniors. Watch the [video](#), and others at The U.S. Health Reform's [Channel](#) on YouTube.

You're the Counselor:

Clare has been researching different supplemental plans and has decided on purchasing a Medigap Plan F. She will be 65 next month and was told she has "guaranteed issue," but when she called the insurance company they wouldn't give her a quote over the phone. When she asked why, they told her the only way she could get prices was by them coming to her home. Clare thinks they are using strong armed tactics and wonders if there is anything she can do???

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