

Seniors in 12 Countries to Be Trained to Spot Medicare Fraud

Training will begin soon to help Medicare beneficiaries in 12 Oregon counties — including the Portland metro area — to identify and report billing fraud that annually costs billions of dollars.

The effort, part of a federal initiative to cut Medicare fraud, waste and abuse, is supported by \$220,000 in newly announced federal grants to Oregon.

The grant will be used to train retired professionals such as lawyers, physicians, teachers and accountants to teach other seniors how to identify and report Medicare fraud. The first training is scheduled in Klamath Falls on July 13.

"When you have a complicated system with a lot of money, some people will always try to exploit it," says GayLynn Pack, project manager for the Senior and Disabled Services Division in the Oregon Department of Human Resources.

"When the system is abused we all lose — both current beneficiaries who have less money for services and people who hope to use Medicare in the future."

Among the tips:

Treat your Medicare card like a credit card, never giving the number to anyone you don't know.

Keep track of your health-care appointments so you can compare services with those on your Medicare monthly statement. "The people who receive those statements are our first line of defense," Pack says.

Beware of sales people who say they work for Medicare.

In Oregon, Pack says, people claiming to represent Medicare call saying they want to set up an appointment to talk about life insurance. "Medicare has no connection with life insurance," she says, although the callers can use a visit

to sell a product, defraud the retiree out of money or scope out the house for a future burglary.

As much as 10 percent of Medicare's \$196 billion annual budget has been lost to fraud, Pack says, although the federal effort of which Oregon is a part has cut losses by more than a third. Officials estimate that \$23 is saved for every anti-fraud dollar spent.

Seniors can report Medicare billing abuses by calling the Senior and Disabled Services Division (800 232-5269). Portland-area seniors interested in volunteering for the "Medicare fraud squad" may call Vicki Hensen at (503) 823-5269.

This information has been enthusiastically received in every area where we're gone," Pack says. "I'm amazed at the number of well-informed consumers who show up."

Differences on HMO Bills

By The Associated Press

Differences between Senate Democratic and Republican versions of a "patients' bill of rights," as shown in votes Thursday, all won by Republicans: WHO IS COVERED?

Democrats: Would have covered all Americans who have private health insurance — an estimated 161 million people.

Republicans: Many provisions only apply to 48 million Americans who are in plans that are regulated only by federal law. This includes greater access to emergency rooms, specialists, medications and the right to choose a health plan that allows them to use doctors who are outside a defined network. RIGHT TO SUE

Democrats: Wanted to let patients who are harmed by the denial of care sue their health insurance companies and collect damages. Current law only allows patients to recoup the cost of denied treatments.

Republicans: No new rights to sue. OBSTETRICIANS AND GYN-NECOLOGISTS

Democrats: Would have let women see OB-GYN doctors without prior approval and designate them as a primary care physicians.

Republicans: Allow women to see them without prior approval, but not to designate them as primary care

doctors. Only applies to federally regulated plans. EMERGENCY ROOM CARE

Democrats: Wanted to require health plans to pay for reasonable care even if the hospital is outside the network. That includes care needed to stabilize patients and follow-up care after they are medically stable.

Republicans: Altered provision to more closely match Democrats, but only applies to federally regulated plans. CLINICAL TRIALS

Democrats: Would have required health plans to pay the routine health care costs associated with clinical trials.

Republicans: Only included cancer patients. MEDICAL NECESSITY

Democrats: Would have given doctors more say over what care is provided by forcing health plans to pay for medically necessary care. They defined that as care consistent with generally accepted principles of professional medical practice.

Republicans: Allow plans to continue determining what care is medically necessary. MASTECTOMY

Democrats: Required that health plans pay for overnight hospital stays if doctor and patient want it.

Republicans: Added virtually identical provision. Unlike other aspects of the GOP bill, applies to all

Americans with private health insurance, about 161 million people. CONTINUITY OF CARE

Democrats: Allow patients who are pregnant or undergoing a course of treatment to keep their doctors for 90 days, even if the doctor leaves the network.

Republicans: Similar, but only applies to patients who are pregnant, terminally ill or institutionalized. TAX CHANGES

Democrats: No provision.

Republicans: Allow people who are self-employed to deduct the cost of health insurance and create a new deduction for long-term care. Allow more medical savings accounts, which let people to set aside money, tax-free, to pay for routine care if they buy a high-deductible insurance policy in case of an emergency. APPEALS

Both require health plans to allow patients to appeal denials, first through an internal process and then to experts outside the plan. But Republicans would only allow for appeals based on medical necessity, not procedural issues. INFORMATION DISCLOSURE

Both require health insurance companies to disclose details about what they cover and how they operate.

Bush Snubs 6,000 Minority Journalists

Although GOP presidential wannabe George W. Bush was in Seattle on a campaign swing, he has no plans to attend the Unity '99 conference — the second joint conference of the Asian American Journalists Association, the National Association of Black Journalists, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, and the Native American Journalists Association — which is currently being held in Seattle.

Sherry Bebitch Jeffe, a political analyst from the Claremont

Graduate University in California, offered the following insight into Bush's snub:

"He's going out of his way to avoid uncontrolled situations with journalists. I'm not sure he's ready for prime time before aggressive reporters, and I think he knows it."

"It may not be racially motivated, but his refusal to show up here and to be in town at the same time will have racial significance. In light of his expressed interests in diversity, he has missed a great opportunity to meet

and greet the people who will define him to minority communities for the year to come," said Charles Ogletree, a professor at Harvard Law School.

"I guess we're not green," said E.R. Shipp of the NABJ. "Even just a walk by and a wave to just show us some of his 'compassionate conservatism' wouldn't be so bad."

Although all presidential candidates were invited to address the conference, only the Democratic candidates — former Senator Bill Bradley and Vice President Al Gore accepted.

Kaiser Permanente Opens Health Resource Center In N Portland

There's a new place to get videos in north Portland. Kaiser Permanente's newest Health Resource Center at its Interstate Medical Office South offers informational videos to help people cope with life and preserve health.

"We have videos on everything from overcoming depression to dealing with diabetes," says John Chen, MD, who directs medical care for Kaiser Permanente in north and central Portland. Kaiser Permanente members may check out videos for a three day period. Anyone from the community is welcome to view videos in the Health Resource Center.

Dr. Chen explains that this Health Resource Center, the newest of Kaiser's three health libraries, provides current health and wellness information in a variety of formats. Visitors can select health education handouts, investigate reference books, access CD ROM information, explore internet resources, buy books, or pick up a health education catalog. The Health Resource Center is open to the entire community.

"This resource center will help Kaiser Permanente members and local residents alike learn about almost any health topic under the sun," says

Dr. Chen. "When people know more about a particular condition or health in general they can become more active partners in their own health."

Kaiser Permanente members can also learn how to get certain health services on-line, such as prescription refills and non-urgent medical questions answered by return e-mail.

The Health Resource Center will be open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. A day-long public celebration to mark the center's opening will be held Thursday, July 22.

The center is located on the ground floor of the medical office at 3500 N. Interstate Avenue in Portland.

Community Court Project Begins New Schedule

The Community Court project will begin a new schedule designed to give defendants more specialized attention and free up judicial resources. Defendants, their attorneys and a social services coordinator will be at the Court from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. During this time, defendants will be able to talk to their attorneys and meet with the coordinator to have their social services needs assessed. Court proceedings will begin at 1:00 p.m. Representatives from local social services agencies will be at court at that

time. Based on their earlier social services assessment and conversations with the judge, defendants will be paired with appropriate social service providers. Chronic nuisance agreement negotiations will be held at 4:15 p.m. Community service sentences will continue to be carried out in the North/Northeast Portland community. This new schedule will free up a judge for a full morning, something the previous schedule did not allow. The Community Court Project continues to grow to serve the needs of

Multnomah County communities. In addition to court proceedings, legal services, social services and a mentor program at the N/NE Court, plans are underway to develop Community Courts to serve other parts of Portland. Southeast Portland planners have received a pledge of funds from the Bureau of Justice Assistance start a Community Court this winter. Planners on the west-side of Portland are exploring the opportunity for development of a Community Court to be operational in late 2000.

OSU Prepares Central Oregon Program Expansion

Oregon State University is significantly expanding its educational offerings in central Oregon with a new facility in Bend, enhanced degree programs and other improvement to meet the higher education needs of this rapidly growing region, officials announced today.

More seminars and workshops, faculty lectures, cultural events, applied research in collaboration with local business and industry, improved Extension services, alumni programs and athletic activities will all be possible through this facility and the new OSU Central Oregon initiative, said Paul Risser, University President.

"This is a response to the growing number of requests we have for additional programs and classes in the region," Risser said. "We intended to fully participate with the University Center and deliver classes at Central Oregon Community College. But our new facility will provide easier access to non-COCC students and professionals seeking credit or non-credit educational opportunities. It will be a place for our staff to work, to hold seminars, and for alumni and community events."

In 1997, OSU was asked to develop a plan to expand the Central Oregon University Center, Risser said. Although that plan was not funded, it became apparent that OSU has many of the programs needed by the central Oregon residents.

As one of eight OSU facilities in central Oregon, the new Bend office will serve as OSU's headquarters for the region. While the degree programs and advisers will remain based at the University Center, the new office will be a training facility for non-degree programs and a community center with rooms available for use by community organizations. It will also be a focal

point for alumni and athletic events, have OSU admission information, and OSU promotional items for sale.

OSU has been a part of central Oregon since 1914, when the Extension Service was established. The current expansion was stimulated by the region's growing interest in bachelors degree programs and graduate studies, and by a report published early last year by the Education Team 100, which was formed in October, 1997, to begin shaping central Oregon's educational future.

That report indicated that the primary educational needs of the region were job and industry-related training. It also recommended creating a new entity to offer degree completion opportunities in liberal arts.

Oregon has been offering liberal arts courses in Bend through its distance education program since 1981, and now offers four bachelors degrees: liberal studies, environmental sciences, general agricultural, and natural resources. The program includes over 140 courses delivered in a variety of ways-over Internet, individualized courses with professor, and video and on-site courses held at the University Center.

Since 1991, more than 80 students have graduated with a degree from OSU while living in central Oregon. About 40 OSU faculty lives and works in the central Oregon region, with another 20 in Corvallis working directly with distance education students across Oregon. Central Oregon is home to over 2,300 OSU alumni and 380 current OSU-Corvallis students.

OSU Central Oregon will be guided by the knowledge and expertise of an advisory board representing the tri-county area. The board is comprised of education, business, civic, and cul-

tural leaders from within central Oregon, and members will serve as the president's council on local academic needs and community issues.

The OSU Oregon Advisory Board members are Knute Buebler, Bend Orthopedic and Fracture Clinic, Bend; Jody Calica, Warm Springs; Claudia Campbell: self-employed farmer, Mandras; Jim Carnahan, David Evans and Associates, Bend; Bruce Dausavage, Ochoco Lumber Co., Pringle; Bob Eberhard's Dairy, Redmond; Bob Grim, High Desert Distributors, Bend; Andy Homan, Bend Police Department, Bend; Loren Irving, Deshutes Pine Sales, Bend; Mary Krenowicz, S.S. Johnson Foundation, Redmond; Matthew McCoy, Central Oregon Community College, Bend; Charlie Miller, Miller Lumber, Redmond; Claude and Jean Nave, retired, Black Butte; Curt Olson, Seaswirl Boats, Culver; Stacie Pirtle, Jeld-Wen, Bend; and Ron Wilkinson, Bend-La Pine School District, Bend.

Melanie Fahrenbruch, OSU's Professional Development Coordinator, will spearhead the University's involvement in Central Oregon. Previously, she was a chamber executive in Corvallis and Ft. Collins, Colo. In her current role with SU, she has been designing professional development training programs for employers statewide.

Fahrenbruch conducted an assessment of the needs of major employers in the region. She will represent the University through links to the region's business, political and civic leaders, serve as a resource to academic and administrative units who either offer or are developing programs in Central Oregon, and serve as a liaison to Extension Service staff and office in the region.

A search for a permanent director will begin soon.

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