

The Senior Medicare Patrol is.....

LOOKING OUT FOR YOU

DATE: 6/1/15

2015-7

SUBJECT: It's About Time! Social Security Numbers Will Be Off Medicare Cards

THE GOOD NEWS IS . . .

- o With millions of patients' electronic health records being hacked into and their Medicare numbers and Social Security numbers exposed, Congress FINALLY took action on a problem that has plagued people with Medicare for years.

- o In April 2015 President Obama signed a Congressional Bill into law, banning Social Security numbers from being used on new and current Medicare cards.

- o Congress budgeted about \$320 million over four years to pay for the change. More than 4,500 people per day sign up for Medicare. By 2025, 74 million people will have Medicare.

AND THE BAD NEWS IS . . .

- o Medicare and Social Security officials have up to four years to come up with identifiers for new Medicare beneficiaries and up to **FOUR MORE** years from then, to issue new cards to **CURRENT** beneficiaries. So, the Social Security numbers on your Medicare cards will be at risk for being stolen for as long as eight more years.

- o While you wait for the safer Medicare ID card, beware of callers that pretend to be from Medicare or an Agency and ask for your Medicare number to make sure you get your new card. Or offer to get the new Medicare card to you faster for free or for a small fee; just give them your Medicare number. Hang up!

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?

ID theft can happen to anyone. Getting hold of your Social Security number can open up your life to hackers and thieves. Once your identity is stolen, it can take years to re-establish your identity and credit. So . . .

Check your medical statements and financial statements to make sure no one is using your medical or financial ID to drain monies from your accounts.

Tell everyone you know, who is or will soon be on Medicare, about the change. Don't fall for calls, postcards, commercials or emails that offer to help you get your new Medicare card.

Contact SMP Hawaii by phone at (808) 586-7281 or 800-296-9422 or through www.smphawaii.org to report Medicare scams. Ask for our brochures about checking your medical statements and medical identity theft. Invite SMP to speak to your group or ask for counseling about billing errors.



The production of this bulletin was supported by Grant # 90MP0180 from the Administration for Community Living (ACL). Its contents are solely the responsibility of SMP Hawaii and do not necessarily represent the official views of ACL.