



the *Effort*

Elder Fraud Fighters of Oregon Tribune

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What is Medicare fraud and abuse?

Medicare fraud

Fraud occurs when an individual or organization deliberately deceives others to gain some sort of unauthorized benefit. Health care fraud generally involves deliberately billing for services that were not received or billing for a service at a higher rate than is actually justified.

Medicare abuse

Health care abuse occurs when providers supply services or products that are not medically necessary or that do not meet professional standards.

Examples of fraud and abuse:

- Billing for services and supplies that were not provided or not needed;
- "Free" services as part of a "study" that require your Medicare ID;
- Equipment not delivered or ordered before a prescription is written;
- Using another person's Medicare card to obtain medical care.

**For assistance call the SMP Program
1-877-585-0007.**

Local ALERTS

...Possible home repair scam

A man has been contacting older adults and persons with disabilities in the northwest portion of the state using the ruse of saying:

- He is being sent by Seniors and People with Disabilities offices.
- He is being sent by the Consortium of Community Services.
- He claims he works for Karma, but does not have a business card.

He offers to fix roofs for a cost. There are five known victims.

Investigators from the Toledo, Newport and Lincoln City Police Departments, as well as the Lincoln County DA's office have been informed.

...Possible DME Scam

A meal sight in Riddle, Oregon reported that a Durable Medical Equipment (DME) representative has been targeting seniors in a possible fraud practice. He places an ad in the local paper and targets senior centers and meal sites in an attempt to sell diabetic-therapeutic shoes and diabetic testing equipment.

When SMP staff called the private cell phone number, he gave the following information:

“We do all of the work for you. You have nothing to worry about. All they have to do is come down to the senior center and get fitted for the shoes. We know how to bill Medicare. All you actually need for Medicare to cover the

bill is a circulation issue and they all have that at their ages.”

Why is this possibly fraud?

- He is asking for personal information for billing.
- He is misleading you by claiming, “We know how to bill Medicare. You do not have to pay for anything.”
- He fits you for the shoe BEFORE you have a prescription from your doctor, assuming you would qualify.

The proper steps to take to receive therapeutic shoes are to:

- Consult with your doctor, he knows your medical history.
- If a need is diagnosed, get a prescription from your doctor for the durable medical equipment or shoes in this case.
- You make contact with a reputable durable medical equipment company that you know and trust or one that is recommended by your doctor. —



OIG report for the first half of FY 2009

In its “Semiannual Report to Congress,” the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG) announced expected recoveries of more than \$2.4 billion.

\$274.8 million are in audit-related receivables with \$2.2 billion in investigative-related receivables. This includes nearly \$552 million in non-Health and Human Services receivables resulting in OIG work. Savings from implemented recommendations are calculated annually and will be reported in the final fiscal year 2009 “Semiannual Report.”

The report also listed the exclusions of 1,415 individuals and organizations for fraud and abuse involving Federal health care programs and/or their beneficiaries; 293 criminal actions against individuals or organizations that engaged in crimes against Health and Human Services programs; and 243 civil actions, which included False Claims Act and unjust enrichment suits, Civil Monetary Penalties Law settlements, and administrative recoveries related to provider self-disclosure matters.

- Eli Lilly and Company, a drug manufacturer, agreed to plead guilty and pay approximately \$1.4 billion to the Federal Government and participating States for promoting its anti-psychotic drug Zyprexa for uses not approved by the Food and Drug Administration and not covered by Medicaid or other Federal programs. Lilly entered into a 5-year Corporate Integrity Agreement with OIG that includes provisions to increase the accountability of its Board of Directors and management.
- Miami physician, Ana Alvarez-Jacinto was sentenced to 30 years in prison and ordered to pay more than \$8.2 million in restitution in connection with an HIV infusion fraud scheme. At the Saint Jude Rehab Center Inc, HIV positive Medicare patients were paid cash kickbacks in exchange for allowing Alvarez-Jacinto to prescribe unnecessary infusion treatments. This case was brought by the Medicare Fraud Strike Force, a multi-agency team of prosecutors and investigators that uses real-time analysis of Medicare billing data to assist in the identification, investigations and prosecution of individuals and companies that have committed Medicare fraud. —

BEWARE of promised credit fixes

Desperate times can lead to desperate action. In the case of a downturn in the economy it can lead to disastrous mistakes where people lose more money than they can afford. When

people are worried about making credit card payments or maxing out their limits, they are likely to fall victim to fast talk about easy fixes. There is no easy fix to a credit problem.

Candice Twyman, Executive Director of the Better Business Bureau Education

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Foundation, warns people to be very careful when considering offers from debt consolidation or debt negotiating companies. "Be sure and check out the companies very carefully. Use your Better Business Bureau, but read the report carefully," states Twyman. Twyman says the things to look for in the report are:

- 1) How long has the company been in business;
- 2) The rating the company has with the BBB;
- 3) The number of complaints; and
- 4) How the complaints were resolved.

The length of time the company has been in business is very important because they may not have had time to establish a track record, good or bad. They may be so new, the BBB does not even have a report on them. They may have been in business only a few months and the complaints have not started coming in.

The best advice is to do your homework before giving away your money. Use the resources available to you through the Better Business Bureau at www.bbb.org, Consumer Reports Web site at www.consumerreports.org and federal watchdog agencies such as the Federal Trade Commission at www.ftc.gov. They have valuable information that can stop you from making a costly mistake. —

Credit and debit card scam

The National Consumer Protection Resource Center reports yet another scam. According to a recent complaint, a New York company tried to take money from a woman's debit card by charging the card \$1.89. Her bank called her and asked if she had made the charge and then told her that scam artists make a small charge like the \$1.89. If that charge clears, the scam artist will place a larger debit (such as \$1,000.00) on the card. Then they will keep charging the card until someone realizes what is happening.

Her credit card company contacted the same consumer because, again, a New York company tried to charge \$.80 onto the card. The charge was for a computer. The credit card company told her that it is their policy not to let small amounts go through without verifying that they are legitimate. The charge to the credit card was made by an Internet authorization. The caller says that she pays her bills online but does not do anything else online. She has since cancelled both cards. —



Foreclosure ALERT

If your property mortgage is delinquent and you are facing foreclosure, you may be contacted by a person or company willing to take the property off your hands to save your credit. While some of these companies do what they advertise and do help, others do not.

Remember the following...

- Do not sign anything that you do not understand or that is blank.
- Go through a reputable escrow company to make sure that your mortgage is paid off to the satisfaction of the lender.

If you do not do this, you may find that the person or company has title to or owns your property, yet the debt is still in your name.



The person or company pays nothing to the mortgage(s) holder. The foreclosure happens. Your credit is ruined while the company “saving” your credit has made money from your property by renting it until the foreclosure. —

Reverse mortgage ALERT

Reverse mortgages are becoming popular in America. Reverse mortgages are a special type of home loan that lets a homeowner convert the equity in his/her home into cash. They can give a lot of older Americans greater financial security to supplement social security, meet unexpected medical expenses, make home improvements and more.

If you are interested in a reverse mortgage, beware of scam artists that charge thousands of dollars for information that is free from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Also, be cautious if anyone tries to sell you something like an annuity and suggests that a reverse mortgage would be an easy way to pay for it. If you don't fully understand what they're selling or you're not sure you need what they're selling, be even more skeptical.

No matter why you decide to take out a reverse mortgage, you generally have at least three business days after signing the loan document to cancel it for any reason without penalty. Remember that you must cancel in writing. The lender must return any money you have paid so far for the financing.

For more information, contact HUD at www.HUD.gov. —

Fake Walmart survey scam

There is a recent e-mail scam circulating around the Internet and enticing readers to take part in a Walmart survey. It leads you to believe that Walmart will compensate you for your time to take the survey. The e-mail reads something like this...

“You have been chosen by Walmart to take part in our Customer Satisfaction Survey.

If you decide to complete this survey, Walmart will send \$150 to your confirmed credit or debit card account just for your time.

Helping us better understand how our customers feel benefits everyone. With the information collected we can decide to direct a number of changes to improve and expand our services.”

These very official-looking e-mails are a scam. Walmart’s corporate offices state: “Walmart does not participate in this type of promotion and has no affiliation with them. If you receive a survey, please contact your local authorities as well as the Federal Trade Commission.”

Getting the word out about these scams as quickly as possible is the best way to fight them. —

The IRS “Dirty Dozen” tax scams

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) recently issued its 2008 list of the 12 most egregious tax schemes and scams, highlighted by Internet *phishing* scams and several frivolous tax arguments.

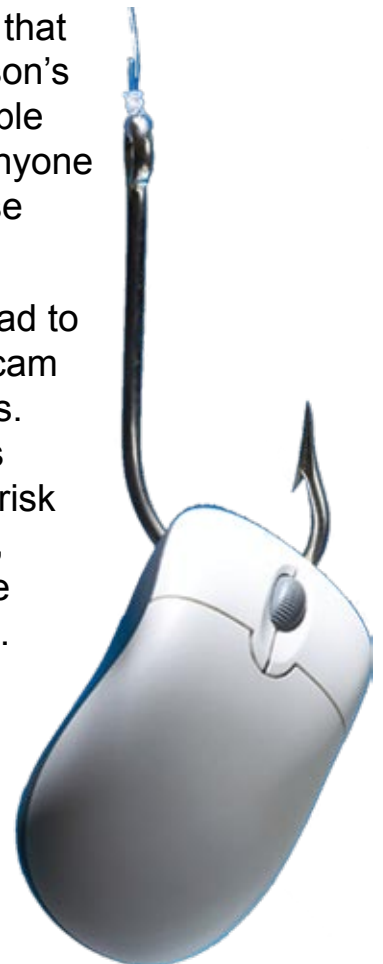
Topping this year’s list of scams is *phishing*, which encompasses numerous Internet-based ploys to steal financial information from taxpayers. Some of the other Dirty Dozen include: Economic Stimulus Payment scams, Abusive Retirement Plans, Tax Return Preparer Fraud and Misuse of Trusts.

“Taxpayers should be wary of scams and promises to avoid paying taxes that seem too good to be true,” Acting IRS Commissioner Linda Stiff said. “There

is no secret formula that can eliminate a person’s tax obligations. People should be wary of anyone peddling any of these scams.”

Tax schemes can lead to problems for both scam artists and taxpayers. Tax return preparers and promoters also risk significant penalties, interest and possible criminal prosecution.

To read the full “Dirty Dozen” go to the IRS’ Internet newsroom at www.irs.gov/newsroom. —



Don't put your health in the hands of CROOKS

It couldn't be easier — ordering prescription drugs online with a few clicks of the mouse and having them delivered right to your door, without ever having to see a doctor.

- But is it safe?
- Is it legal?

Often it is neither, and you need to know the risks. Yes, there are plenty of legitimate U.S. pharmaceutical companies and pharmacies (including online ones) that follow all the laws and regulations and put public safety first.

But there are many that don't — they are just out to make a fast buck at your expense.

These shady businesses fill orders without prescriptions. They pay doctors just to take a quick glance at your brief medical questionnaire. They don't know if you are drug-addicted, underage or have another condition that their medications could make worse. And they don't care.

Worse yet, the products they peddle are questionable, at best.

The drugs may be past their expiration date. They may be counterfeit, mislabeled, contaminated or made in laboratories far from the safety-conscious eyes of the Food and Drug Administration.

Part of the problem is that these illegal pharmacies are all over the Internet. More than 80,000 Web sites have links to potentially illegal pharmacies. You don't even have to search for these



offers — they often come straight to your inbox as e-mail spam, enticing you with phenomenally cheap drugs.

Are there ways to tell whether an online pharmacy is legal?

Definitely, and here's what to look for. Legitimate online pharmacies:

- Require a prescription from a licensed doctor, usually by mail (if they accept a fax copy, they will always call your doctor to verify the prescription);
- Make you submit a detailed medical history;
- Clearly state their payment, privacy, and shipping fees on their sites; and
- Use secure or encrypted Web site connections for transactions.

Many legitimate online pharmacies are also certified by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy — check its Web site for a listing (www.napb.net). Bear in mind, some of the larger Internet pharmacies may not be certified because of their already well-recognized names.

The FBI's bottom-line advice...

Do your homework and steer clear of illegal Internet pharmacies, even if the prices are tempting. It's your health, after all! —

THE VERDICT: HANG UP!

*Don't fall for
jury duty scam*

The phone rings, you pick it up, and the caller identifies himself as an officer of the court. He says you failed to report for jury duty and that a warrant is out for your arrest. You say you never received a notice. To clear it up, the caller says he'll need some information for "verification purposes" — your birth date, social security number, maybe even a credit card number.

HANG UP THE PHONE! IT'S A SCAM!

Jury scams have been around for years, but have seen resurgence in recent months. Communities in more than a dozen states have issued public warnings about cold calls from people claiming to be court officials seeking personal information. As a rule, court officers never ask for confidential information over the phone; they generally correspond with prospective jurors via mail.

The scam's bold simplicity may be what makes it so effective. Facing the unexpected threat of arrest, victims are caught off guard and may be quick to part with some information to defuse the situation.

With enough information, scammers can assume your identity and empty your bank accounts.



In recent months, communities in Florida, New York, Minnesota, Illinois, Colorado, Oregon, California, Virginia, Oklahoma, Arizona and New Hampshire reported scams or posted warnings about this issue. In August (2008), the federal court system issued a warning on the scam.

In September 2008, the FBI issued a press release about jury scams and suggested victims also contact their local FBI field office. The press release can be found at: www.fbi.gov/pressrel/pressrel05/092805.htm.

The jury scam is a simple variation of the identity-theft ploys that have proliferated in recent years, as personal information and good credit have become identity thieves' preferred prey, particularly on the Internet.

Scammers might tap your information to make a purchase on your credit card, but could just as easily sell your information to the highest bidder on the Internet's black market.

Protecting yourself is the key:

Never give out personal information when you receive an unsolicited phone call. —



A message from Oregon Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP)

Every year the Medicare system is drained of billions of dollars as a result of fraud, error, waste and abuse.

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Loda Hite, Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) coordinator for Oregon. I work closely with Senior Health Insurance Benefits Assistance (SHIBA), law enforcement agencies, Medicare and Medicaid offices, as well as the National Consumer Protection Technical Resource Center. My mission is to empower seniors to protect themselves, and detect and report health care fraud.

For SHIBA volunteers, I offer an hour long Medicare/Medicaid Fraud and Scam training. Featured in the photo is Sam Liken, the Douglas County coordinator, and her volunteers. This was my first presentation. Since that time, I have given training for Baker, Benton, Clatsop, Coos, Curry, Gilliam, Harney, Hood River, Sherman, Wasco, Wheeler, Josephine, Klamath, Lane, Lincoln, Linn, Malheur, Marion, Polk, Yamhill, Tillamook, Union, and Wallow Counties.

I also welcome the opportunity to speak directly with clients at senior centers and meal sites. During the presentation, I give an overview of what “is” and “is not” fraud; I review steps to protect Oregonians by teaching them to detect and report fraud using the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Health Care Journal. Before leaving, I hand out local scam alerts.

Several times a year, I attend conferences, health fairs and SHIBA public events. So far in 2009, I have attended such events as: The St. Elizabeth Health Fair, Discovery Expo Conference, The Disability Mega Conference and Team Work in Tight Times Conference.

Join me in the fight to protect, detect and report. If you hear of an event, conference, health fair, or public event geared for those receiving Medicare, please contact me. More importantly, if you are experiencing fraudulent activity, call me and we can report it together. —

Loda Hite
SMP Program Coordinator
1-877-585-0007



SMP Calendar

County	Training	Date
Clackamas	Fraud Training	08/13/09
Washington	Fraud Training	08/18/09
National	SMP Conference 2009	08/18/09
Marion	Recruitment/Health Fair	10/16/09
Benton	"1st 1/2 SHIBA A,B,C, and D"	10/20/09
Benton	"2nd 1/2 SHIBA A,B,C, and D"	10/27/09
Linn	"1st 1/2 SHIBA A,B,C, and D"	11/03/09
Linn	"2nd 1/2 SHIBA A,B,C, and D"	11/10/09

The Effort Web page

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