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Contact Information

[INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME. INCLUDE SENIOR MEDICARE PATROL.]  
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**Senior Medicare Patrol Reports Hospice Fraud is on the Rise**

“Hospice fraud is a growing problem in many parts of the nation. Patients are being targeted with aggressive marketing, being billed for care they did not receive, and may even be falsely diagnosed with a terminal illness to justify enrollment,” said [INSERT SMP CONTACT NAME AND TITLE HERE. Be sure to also include “Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP)”].

The focus of hospice is on comfort and quality of life (palliative care) rather than on curing illnesses. It includes pain control, symptom management, and counseling for beneficiaries and their families in an effort to make the last days of a beneficiary's life as comfortable as possible.

Hospice fraud occurs when Medicare is falsely billed for any level of hospice care or services. The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Office of Inspector General released [two reports](mailto:https://www.ajmc.com/focus-of-the-week/oig-reports-find-deficiencies-in-hospice-care-and-resulting-harms-to-patients) that indicated some Medicare beneficiaries were seriously harmed when hospices provided poor care or failed to take action in cases of abuse. The reports also showed that the majority of hospices that participated in Medicare had one or more deficiencies in the quality of care they provided.

Hospice is an important benefit for the Medicare population, and the program and beneficiaries need to be protected from fraud, waste, and abuse. There are several ways that beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers can help.

The SMP recommends that before a beneficiary agrees to hospice services, they should:

* Be sure their doctor has assessed their condition
* Be sure their doctor has certified that they qualify for hospice benefits (meaning they are terminally ill and expected to live six months or less if the disease runs its normal course)
* Be cautious of high-pressure and unsolicited marketing of hospice services
* Never accept gifts (such as money, gift cards, or groceries) in return for hospice services and be wary of “too-good-to-be-true” offers

The SMP also recommends beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers watch for and report:

* Enrollment in hospice without the knowledge or permission of the patient or family
* Billing for a higher level of hospice care than was needed or provided or for services not received
* The use of high-pressure and unsolicited marketing tactics of hospice services
* Providing less care on the weekends and disregarding a beneficiary’s care plan

The Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) is ready to provide you with the information you need to PROTECT yourself from Medicare fraud, errors, and abuse; DETECT potential fraud, errors, and abuse; and REPORT your concerns. SMPs help educate and empower Medicare beneficiaries in the fight against health care fraud. Your SMP can help you with your questions, concerns, or complaints about potential fraud and abuse issues. It also provides information and educational presentations. To locate the local Senior Medicare Patrol, contact [INSERT CONTACT INFORMATION].