[USE YOUR OWN LETTERHEAD, INCLUDING LOGO]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact Information

[INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME. INCLUDE SENIOR MEDICARE PATROL.]
[INSERT CONTACT NAME]
[INSERT PHONE NUMBER]
[INSERT EMAIL ADDRESS]

**Medical Identity Theft Can Cost in Dollars Lost and Days Lived**

Medical identity theft occurs when someone uses your personal information – such as your name and Medicare number – to bill for services or supplies you did not receive. Fraudsters may sign you up for unneeded services like hospice or they may bill Medicare for a wheelchair in your name, unbeknownst to you.

“Accurate medical records are crucial to receiving proper medical care, and fraudsters will stop at nothing for their own financial gain,” said [INSERT SMP CONTACT NAME AND TITLE HERE. Be sure to also include “Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP)”]. “If you’re on hospice when you are not dying, you could be denied medical care when you need it to live. If someone bills Medicare for a wheelchair that you never received and don’t need, Medicare may deny the claim when you do really need it.”

When any new information arises for the public to navigate – in areas such as pandemics, new medical advances, or Medicare changes, for example – fraudsters use the shifting landscape to steal people’s medical identity.

Clues that your medical identity may be compromised include: receiving boxes of braces, testing kits, or other medical supplies in the mail that you did not request; being contacted by a debt collection company for a provider bill that you do not owe; receiving doctor’s office calls to cancel appointments because they think you’re on hospice; or giving out your Medicare number after receiving calls about “free” services or products.

To prevent medical identity theft:

* Never give out your Medicare number to anyone other than your doctor, health care provider, or other trusted representative.
* Protect your Medicare number by protecting your Medicare card as you would a credit card.
* Never give out your Medicare number to anyone who contacts you through unsolicited calls, texts, or emails.
* Understand that Medicare and Social Security already have your Medicare and Social Security numbers. If someone calls, emails, or texts claiming they need this information, don’t give it to them. Instead, find the organization’s contact information on your own (don’t use caller ID) and call or email them directly to discuss the situation.
* Be cautious of anyone who comes to your door offering “free” testing, treatments, or supplies for genetic diseases, cancer, or the coronavirus.
* Do not click on links from sources you don’t know, as this could put your computer or device at risk. Make sure the anti-malware and anti-virus software on your computer are up to date.
* Be cautious when purchasing medical supplies from unverified or unknown sources, including online advertisements and email/phone solicitations.

“If you gave out your Medicare number, it is now considered ‘compromised.’ If this happens, we recommend that you request a new Medicare number from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) by calling 1-800 Medicare (800-633-4227) to prevent any further abuse,” said INSERT SMP CONTACT NAME. “The Senior Medicare Patrol program is also happy to help you sort through the details of your particular situation.”

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].