

## Rules for the H1N1 vaccine and seasonal flu coverage and reimbursement

A new Special Edition MLN Matters article regarding Billing for the Administration of the Influenza A (H1N1) Vaccine is now available. This article explains Medicare coverage and reimbursement rules for the H1N1 vaccine and also addresses seasonal flu coverage and reimbursement.

Note that Medicare will pay for seasonal flu vaccinations even if the vaccinations are rendered earlier in the year than normal. Such preparations are critical for the upcoming flu season, especially in planning for the influenza A (H1N1) vaccine.

Though Medicare typically pays for one vaccination per year, if more than one vaccination per year is

medically necessary (i.e., the number of doses of a vaccine and/or type of influenza vaccine), then Medicare will pay for those additional vaccinations.

Our Medicare claims processing contractors have been notified to expect and prepare for earlier-than-usual seasonal flu claims and there should not be a problem in getting those claims paid. Furthermore, in the event that it is necessary for Medicare beneficiaries to receive both a seasonal flu vaccination and an influenza A (H1N1) vaccination, then Medicare will pay for both.

Please be advised that if either vaccine is provided free of charge to the health care provider, then Medicare

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Adam Hamm  
Insurance Commissioner

Welcome to the *RxConnector* newsletter!

Dear friends,

This newsletter is designed to keep you up-to-date about the Prescription Connection for North Dakota program and to keep you in the know about the various prescription assistance programs that are available. From time to time, we may also include other items of interest related to Medicare and the State Health Insurance Counseling (SHIC) program.

As always, thank you so much for all that you do for the Prescription Connection program. Without your help, our work would be that much harder. Your efforts are valued and appreciated.

If you have items of interest that you think should be included in this newsletter, we would love to hear about them. Please contact Sharon St. Aubin at [sstaubin@nd.gov](mailto:sstaubin@nd.gov) or call her at 1.888.575.6611.



Adam Hamm  
Insurance Commissioner

will only pay for the vaccine's administration (not for the vaccine itself).

All providers administering flu vaccine should review this article and be sure that their billing staff are aware of this information. For more information,

## IPAT is cleaning house

Looking for gently used assistive technology (AT)? IPAT may be able to help. To make room for new equipment, IPAT is giving away AT software/devices that are in working order, but are seldom used or no longer manufactured. Equipment from all assistive technology categories is available, such as: augmentative communication, environmental controls, computer access, aids for learning, aids for daily living, vision and hearing. Examples of devices that will be given away are: Alpha Talkers, AlphaSmarts, trackballs, walkie-talkies, switches, emergency dialers and keyboards.

please read the article located at:  
<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLN MattersArticles/downloads/SE0920.pdf>

*Source: CMS*

Call IPAT at 1-800-895-4728. Shipping of the item will be the recipient's responsibility.

*Source: AT KEY August 2009*



## Insurers seek savings by offering coverage for care in other countries

More insurers are offering networks of doctors overseas and in other countries for their policyholders as a way to save money as lawmakers struggle with how to drive down costs, The Associated Press/USA Today reports.

“As Washington searches for ways to tame the country's escalating health care costs, more insurers are offering networks of surgeons and dentists in places like India and Costa Rica, where costs can be as much as 80 percent less than in America. Until recently, most Americans traveling abroad for cheaper non-emergency medical care were

either uninsured or wealthy.” But this profile is changing. “Now, they are more likely to be people covered by private insurers, which are looking to keep costs from spiraling out of control. The four largest commercial U.S. health insurers—with enrollments totaling nearly 100 million people—have either launched pilot programs offering overseas travel or explored it. Several smaller insurers and brokers also have introduced travel options for hundreds of employers around the country” (Murphy, 8/23).

*Source: Kaiser Daily Health Report*

## Generic drug roundup

Each year, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approves many generic drugs that treat a wide variety of conditions and help consumers save money.

Significant approvals for prescription products granted by FDA's Office of Generic Drugs since January 2009 include:

Brand name	Generic
Ambien	Zolpidem
Coreg	Carvedilol
Casodex	Bicalutamide
CoSopt Ophthalmic Solution	Dorzolamide and Timolol Maleate
Depakote	Divalproex
Fosamax	Alendronate Sodium
Imitrex	Sumatriptan
Keppra	Levetiracetam Oral
Kytril	Granisetron
Pravachol	Pravastatin
Plan B	Levonorgestrel Tablets
Razadyne	Galantamine
Requip	Ropinirole
Risperdal	Risperidone
Trileptal	Oxcarbazepine
Topamax	Topiramate
Zyrtec	Cetirizine

## VA alert

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is warning Veterans not to give credit card numbers over the phone to callers claiming to update VA prescription information. Veteran Service Organizations have brought to VA's attention that callers are misrepresenting the VA to gain personal information over the phone. They say VA recently changed procedures for dispensing prescriptions and ask for the Veteran's credit card number. Veterans

with questions about VA services should contact the nearest VA medical center or call, toll-free, 1-877-222-8387.

This information has recently been updated, and can be read by visiting this link:  
[www.disability.gov/benefits/other\\_benefits\\_programs/veterans](http://www.disability.gov/benefits/other_benefits_programs/veterans).

## Seasonal influenza vaccines

Take time to read information from the following link:  
<http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm100139.htm>.

The influenza vaccine for the 2009-2010 influenza season is set. Now it's up to you to make sure that you and your loved ones are protected.

*Source: FDA*

## Committed citizens can change the world

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” —Margaret Mead

As summer wraps up, and town halls come to an end, we need your help. The Medicare Rights Center’s Consumer Action Board (CAB) is composed of community leaders throughout the United States who understand firsthand what it means to have Medicare, and therefore understand how health care reform can benefit people with Medicare.



With the misinformation and misrepresentations that have been spread during this summer, we need to continue to speak in support of the positive changes being discussed as a part of health care reform. For people with Medicare, the “America’s Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009” (HR 3200), offers various cost-saving provisions and expands their access to a number of benefits. We need to continue to show Congress that we support the closing of the doughnut hole; measures to reduce out-of-pocket expenses such as fully covering preventive treatments; and increasing payments to primary care doctors, which will improve access to doctors who can help people with Medicare manage chronic conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure. Members of the CAB are encouraged to speak with their legislators as well as reach out to organizations that can become our allies in building a social movement around this legislation.

The CAB is a group of people who are committed to the principle that all Americans should have access to affordable, high-quality health care. The Medicare Rights Center seeks to broaden the reach of our CAB, in order to communicate our policy positions to local communities, the media, policymakers and elected officials. We are looking for people to strengthen the voice of the consumer in the health care reform debate.

The CAB has also focused on bringing coverage to people who must wait two years before receiving Medicare because of a disability. Approximately 1.5 million Americans under the age of 65 who have a disabling illness or injury and who also qualify for Social Security Disability are struggling with the high costs of health coverage. Some 400,000 of these individuals currently have no insurance at all. Health care reform will create an individual insurance market called the “exchange,” where people will no longer be denied insurance because of a pre-existing condition. HR 3200 ends the lifetime limit on benefits, so people with disabilities will be able to continue receiving the care they need without fear of bankruptcy.

The Medicare Rights Center is working closely with policymakers and experts to continue efforts in finding a viable option for the people in the waiting period.

Throughout the fall, the CAB will reach out to state and federal allies, including legislators. Too many are unaware that this cruel and arbitrary waiting period exists. It is the job of grassroots organizing to create movement to bring about this imperative change. The Medicare Rights Center is looking to strengthen the voice of the CAB and expand to all 50 states.

To join, visit the CAB website: [www.medicarerights.org/about-mrc/consumer\\_action\\_board.php](http://www.medicarerights.org/about-mrc/consumer_action_board.php)

*Source: Asclepius*

## Diabetes assistance programs

Program Name	Summary	Areas of Service
<a href="#">Abbott Diabetes Care Patient Assistance Program</a>	This program provides free monitoring systems, strips and lancets to those who qualify.	National
<a href="#">BD Insulin Syringe Assist Program</a>	Assistance program for people who use BD Ultra-Fine insulin syringes	National
<a href="#">Charles Ray III Diabetes Association, Inc</a>	This program provides free testing supplies to diabetes in need.	National
<a href="#">Diabetes Care Program</a>	This program assists individuals with Type 2 Diabetes who have no insurance.	Must be a US Citizen or Legal Resident
<a href="#">IPump.org</a>	This program assists qualifying children up to age 20 with assistance in purchasing their first insulin pump. Adults are not presently covered.	National
<a href="#">IPump.org- Insulin Monthly Assistance Program</a>	This program provides assistance to qualifying individuals to help cover the cost of diabetes care for one to three months.	National
<a href="#">IPump.org- Request for Essential Diabetes Supplies (REDS)</a>	This program provides supplies to qualified individuals.	National
<a href="#">Patient Advocate Foundation (PAF) Co-Pay Relief Program</a>	This program provides direct financial support for co-payments to insured patients, including Medicare Part D beneficiaries, who must financially and medically qualify to access pharmaceutical co-payment assistance.	National
<a href="#">Xubex Free Diabetes Kit &amp; Supplies</a>	This program provides free diabetic supplies to those who qualify.	National

## Update to FDA alert about stolen insulin

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is reminding the public that stolen vials of the long-acting insulin Levemir made by Novo Nordisk Inc. still may be on the market. FDA first alerted the public to the theft in June 2009.

Evidence gathered to date suggests that the stolen insulin was not stored and handled properly and may be dangerous for people to use. The agency has received multiple reports of patients who suffered an adverse event due to poor control of glucose levels after using a vial from one of the stolen lots.

In June 2009, FDA reported that three lots of Levemir totaling 129,000 vials had been stolen in North Carolina. So far only about 2 percent of the total amount stolen has been recovered.

The agency continues to aggressively investigate this matter and is asking for the public's help in reporting any information regarding these vials to FDA's Office of Criminal Investigations (OCI) by calling

800-551-3989 or by visiting the OCI Web site.

### Advice for patients

Check your personal supply of insulin to determine if you have Levemir insulin from one of the following lots: XZF0036; XZF0037; XZF0038. You can locate the lot number on the side of the box of insulin and also on the side of the vial.

Do not use your Levemir insulin if it is from one of these lots. Replace it with a vial of Levemir insulin from another lot. If you must switch to another brand of insulin for any reason, first contact your health care provider because another insulin product may require adjustments in dosing.

Always look at your insulin carefully before using it. Levemir is a clear and colorless solution.

*Source: FDA*

## Health insurance costs passed on to workers

Kaiser Health News reports that “employers struggling with the steady rise of health insurance costs—which in 2009 increased 5 percent to an average of \$13,375 for family coverage—are passing on more of the expense to their workers through higher deductibles and co-payments, according to survey released today.” The survey was by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Health Research & Educational Trust (Galewitz and Villegas, 9/15).

*Source: Kaiser Health News*

## Facing facts about acne

Separating the facts from the myths can help people with acne treat the disease and keep it under control.

Click here for more information: [www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm174521.htm](http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm174521.htm)



## Warning on stolen inhalation solutions

FDA is advising consumers not to use certain respiratory medications purchased after Sept. 8, 2009 and manufactured by Dey L.P., a subsidiary of Mylan Inc., because the medications might have been part of a shipment being transported on a tractor-trailer stolen in Tampa, Fla., on Sept. 8, 2009.

Click this link to read more: [www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm182867.htm](http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm182867.htm)

## A parent's guide to kids' vaccines

This updated guide offers useful information about the benefits and risks of vaccines, along with steps to take when children are vaccinated. Click on this link for

more information: [www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm048750.htm](http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm048750.htm)

“It is amazing what can be accomplished when nobody cares about who gets the credit.”

Robert Yates

“Individual commitment to a group effort—that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.”

Vince Lombardi (1913-1970), football coach for the NFL

“I love to hear a choir. I love the humanity... to see the faces of real people devoting themselves to a piece of music. I like the teamwork. It makes me feel optimistic about the human race when I see them cooperating like that.”

Paul McCartney

“Effective teamwork is all about making a good, well-balanced salad, not whipping individuals into a single batch of V8.”

Sandra Richardson, OD Consultant

### **2-1-1 to start Oct. 1**

The North Dakota Insurance Department encourages you to review your Medicare Part D plan every year. Call 2-1-1 for a plan comparison beginning Oct. 1. Have a list of your medications ready, along with your health insurance information. After answering a few questions, you'll get a customized comparison list of Part D plans mailed to you.



## 2009 Medicare Part D annual enrollment events

City	Time	Date	Location and address
Bismarck	9 a.m.–4 p.m.	Monday, Nov. 16	Doublewood Inn Heritage Ballroom 1400 E. Interchange Ave.
Devils Lake	9 a.m.–4 p.m.	Wednesday, Nov. 18	Lake Region State College Chautauqua Gallery 1801 College Dr. N.
Grand Forks	9 a.m.–4 p.m.	Thursday, Nov. 19	Guest House (formerly the Townhouse) Parlors B and C 710 1st Ave. N.
Jamestown	9 a.m.–4 p.m.	Friday, Nov. 20	Jamestown College Reiland Auditorium 610 7 <sup>th</sup> Ave. NE
Williston	9 a.m.–4 p.m.	Monday, Nov. 23	Williston Armory 10 Main St.
Minot	9 a.m.–4 p.m.	Tuesday, Nov. 24	Sleep Inn Celebrations Center 2400 10th St. SW
Dickinson	9 a.m.–4 p.m.	Monday, Nov. 30	Dickinson State University Student Center ballrooms 291 Campus Drive
Wahpeton	9 a.m.–4 p.m.	Wednesday, Dec. 2	Eagles Club 114 Dakota Ave.
Fargo	9 a.m.–4 p.m.	Thursday, Dec. 3	Doublewood Inn Birch and Walnut rooms 3333 13 <sup>th</sup> Ave. S.
Valley City	9 a.m.–4 p.m.	Friday, Dec. 4	Senior Center 139 2 <sup>nd</sup> Ave. SE