

April 11, 2019

For Immediate Release

Topic: Special Fraud Watch – Durable Medical Equipment – Beware of Scams

The Social Security Act prohibits suppliers of durable medical equipment from making unsolicited telephone calls to people on Medicare, yet **Montana’s Senior Medicare Patrol has received multiple reports across the state of scam calls**. Not only have folks been receiving calls selling durable medical equipment, or DME, but several people have received unordered supplies including back braces. **One case alone involves receiving twenty different items from five different companies**.

This month, the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General announced efforts in dismantling one of the largest healthcare fraud schemes ever investigated in the US, in terms of amount billed to Medicare.

People on Medicare should be aware that DME sent by a supplier needs to be prescribed by their doctor. According to CMS, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, fraudulent telemarketing and DME supplies contribute to the estimated \$60 billion in fraudulent Medicare payments each year. Though it may end up being no cost to the person, it is costing Medicare, and until you report it, they will get away with it.

If you receive a call that pressures you to buy medical equipment you don’t want or need, HANG UP.

If you received items in the mail you didn’t order, refuse the delivery or send them back and report it to your local SMP office at 1-800-551-3191.

Until someone else figures out how to stop these unsolicited calls from reaching out to you in the first place, we’ll stop the fraud one case at a time thanks to your help.

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