Put Medicare Fears to Rest

There has been lots of media coverage about health care and about Medicare cuts that have sent a chill down many seniors’ spines.

If you’re among those concerned that doctors have opted out of Medicare and that you’ll be left with a dearth of options, some research by the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) may put your fears to rest.

The KFF issue brief looked at findings from patient surveys, physician surveys, published studies, and new physician data from Medicare to see whether Medicare recipients’ doctor choices and access to those professionals have shrunk.

Here are five key points.

1. On a national level, Medicare patients have good access to physicians, and 96% say they have a usual source of care, primarily a doctor’s office or doctor’s clinic.

2. Most people with Medicare – about 90 percent – are able to schedule timely appointments for routine and specialty care. Medicare seniors are more likely than privately insured adults age 50-64 to report “never” having to wait longer than they want for timely routine care appointments.

3. A small share of Medicare beneficiaries say they looked for a new physician in the past year, and only 2 percent of seniors with Medicare report problems finding one when needed—comparable to rates reported by privately insured adults age 50-64.

4. Physician survey data shows that 91% of non-pediatric physicians accept new Medicare patients.

5. Less than 1 percent of physicians in clinical practice have formally “opted-out” of the Medicare program, with
psychiatrists accounting for the largest share (42%).

Take a look at the complete findings and charts at http://kff.org/medicare/issue-brief/medicare-patients-access-to-physicians-a-synthesis-of-the-evidence/. Of particular interest may be the chart illustrating the state-by-state acceptance rate of Medicare patients.

**Open Yourself to the Twitter Universe**

If you have not explored Twitter, you’re missing out on a vast resource for information, expertise, studies, links, and entertainment.

It can be a starting point if you’re facing an immediate crisis, such as needing a crash course on long-term care or assisted living options, or you need to find a contractor to make your parents’ house friendlier for aging in place.

But it’s also a place to pursue your passions, boost your career, and learn something new.

Look to Twitter for career advice and job hunts; chase down information about your interests, whether that’s photography, interior design, “Downton Abbey,” birding or the environment; follow organizations, such as art museums, linguistic associations, or pro basketball teams; and stay up to date on celebrities and favorite writers.

Twitter also is terrific for vacation planning, since it’s rich with information on destinations, deals, and group tours.

If you’ve not already done so, head over to Twitter and open an account. Learn more about common lingo, privacy, and how to use Twitter at:

- http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/understanding-twitter-basics0.html
- http://mashable.com/guidebook/twitter/
- https://support.twitter.com/

Here are some categories to get you started. Keep in mind that these are the full addresses for accessing the information, but normally you’ll see Twitter handles referred to simply as @xyz or @abc.

**Travel:**

- https://twitter.com/fodorstravel
- https://twitter.com/roadscholarorg
- https://twitter.com/TravlandLeisure
- https://twitter.com/budgettravel

**Personal finance:**

- https://twitter.com/USATMoneyFeed
- https://twitter.com/Bankrate
- https://twitter.com/MarketWatch

**Housing, universal design:**

- https://twitter.com/SREScouncil
- https://twitter.com/houselogic
Innovation and technology:

- https://twitter.com/AgingTech
- https://twitter.com/th_seniors

Careers:

- https://twitter.com/encorecareer
- https://twitter.com/artkoff
- http://www.retirementjobs.com/

Aging well organizations, news:

- https://twitter.com/richeis315
- https://twitter.com/AARP
- https://twitter.com/AARPPolicy
- https://twitter.com/sharpseniors
- https://twitter.com/NCOAging
- https://twitter.com/lifesprk

IRS dirty dozen scams

In advance of tax day every year, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) releases its “Dirty Dozen” list of tax-related scams.

This year's list is out and it includes some of the usual suspects, such as phone scams, identity theft, phishing, tax preparer fraud, and phony charitable organizations.

Before you start doing your tax returns, protect yourself from heartache by reading about what scam artists are up to and ways to recognize their tricks.

Find the IRS document here:
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