

Medicare Part D: Complications Abound

By Woodrow Wilcox

An elderly couple visited our office recently to seek our help. Social Security had deducted five payments for Medicare Part D to an insurance company from each Social Security check of the elderly couple. Instead of their Social Security checks missing \$140 for Medicare Part D payments, their social security checks were missing \$700. The elderly woman asked me, “How are we going to eat this month? Now, we have no money for food!”

Unfortunately, there was little that this or any other insurance agency could do in such a case. We helped the couple to contact Social Security from our office to get some money back. But, insurance agents don’t have any leverage with Social Security.

In previous articles, I reported that several states are suing the federal government over the Medicare Part D program because the law that created the program shifted much of the costs for Medicare Part D onto the States. That legal challenge is still making its way through the courts.

Medicare Part D did not do much to reduce the costs of prescription medicines. It simply changed the payment methods by adding federal bureaucracy and insurance company bureaucracy to the process.

To me, the better solution would be to establish state and federal laws with review boards for regulating what pharmaceutical companies can charge for medicines. The pharmaceutical companies are not the only ones that help to develop new medicines. Taxes subsidize basic and contributing research at universities and research institutions. Tax exemption helps support research at hospitals and clinics. So, really, the tax paying public helped to pay for the development of every medicine that is developed in the U.S. Therefore, the public should have a right to regulate what pharmaceutical companies charge for prescription medicines.

The pharmaceutical companies could have the patents to prevent others from making the same drugs for a limited time. But, there should be no right to unlimited profits. The time, money and energy needed to accomplish this method of cost control would be far less than the present Medicare Part D system which does little or nothing to control the costs of medicine for our senior citizens.