

Medicare Bureaucracy Assists Medicare Fraud

By Woodrow Wilcox

In March, a client of this insurance agency showed me paperwork about a bill which was filed under her identification information, but which was not her bill.

Someone had received services from a local hospital under our client's name and identification. The bill was filed with our client's insurance company. The insurance company sent an EXPLANATION OF BENEFITS to the client. That was when she first learned of the bill. The portion of the bill which the insurance company would not pay was \$912.

I helped the client to contact both the hospital and her insurance company to advise them that she was not in the hospital on the dates of service shown in the bill and the explanation of benefits. I thought that this was just an innocent error, so I did not pursue further work or investigation of the matter.

In late May, the same client visited the office with two new bills that were made with her identification information, but without her. Someone made a bill under our client's name with a nursing home for \$3,213. Also, someone made a bill under our client's name with a hospital in Fort Wayne, Indiana for \$31,173.75.

I helped the client to write letters to these facilities to advise them that she never used their services. Also, I contacted her insurance company and learned that they were already making inquiries about the legitimacy of the bills.

But, I was very surprised when I tried to contact an appropriate officer of Medicare to report possible fraud which needed to be investigated. I got switched around to different people. Finally, I talked to a Medicare supervisor named Dawn Madison. She said that she could not give me an address or a fax number to send a letter and documentation about possible Medicare Fraud because there was no address or fax number that was dedicated to such a purpose.

With all the publicity about identity theft and the victimization of senior citizens in such matters, why doesn't Medicare have a specific office, address, phone, and fax that are dedicated to receiving information about possible Medicare fraud and directing the information received to the appropriate office for investigation and/or prosecution? Why doesn't anyone in the federal government think about practical things like that?

Written May 30, 2006