

## HOSPITAL BILLS MEDICARE, INSURANCE COMPANY, AND PATIENT TWICE – FOR DIFFERENT AMOUNTS!

By Woodrow Wilcox

A hospital in Lake County, Indiana billed Medicare twice for different amounts. This caused problems in the Medicare system. It resulted in a big and unexpected bill for our agency's client who was a senior citizen from Lowell, Indiana.

At first, the hospital sent a bill to Medicare for \$12,497 for dates of service April 2 to April 30 in 2007. Medicare and the insurance company paid on that claim. But, later, the hospital sent a bill to Medicare for \$21,098 for the same patient/client for dates of service April 1 to April 30, 2007.

The insurance company never received any claim from Medicare for the \$21,098. Medicare may have considered it a duplicate claim. So, the insurance company paid nothing on it.

The hospital has used several addresses in correspondence with the patient/client. The hospital is in Lake County, Indiana, but has used addresses in Illinois, Tennessee, and Maryland. The hospital may have used other addresses with Medicare or the insurance company, too. This did not help to find the party to contact to fix the problem.

I wrote a letter addressed to the supervisor of patient accounts at the hospital to explain the conflicting bills and request cooperation. But, no one at the hospital did anything to resolve the problem. Instead, another letter demanding payment from the patient/client was generated.

I persisted in phone calls to the hospital's billing department. I finally found someone who was at another location but claimed to have the authority to resolve the problem. So, I faxed all the documents about the conflicting bills to this person. I hope that this will resolve the billing problem for our client.

Our insurance agency is not legally obligated to help with customer service and billing problems. We help because we care about our clients and we know that the Medicare system creates many billing problems which often require the assistance of someone to the senior citizen. For those Medicare enrolled senior citizens who have billing problems and no assistance, the results can be "dings" on credit reports for bills that are not really owed or paying bills that are not really owed.

Written and distributed in August 2008 by  
Woody Wilcox, Wilcox News Service