

MEDICARE AS PRIMARY INSURER VERSUS MEDICARE AS SECONDARY INSURER

By Woodrow Wilcox

Over half of every day that I work is spent in fixing Medicare bill payment problems. There are many ways that Medicare does not work well when it comes to getting bills paid for the senior citizens who rely on Medicare.

One problem which keeps arising has an easy preventative solution that every senior citizen can pro-actively use.

When a senior citizen relies on a group health insurance plan as a primary insurer after reaching age 65 and enrolling in Medicare, the termination of the private group health insurance can cause billing problems.

The senior citizen could be covered by a group insurance plan through work or through the employment of a spouse who is part of a group plan that provides coverage for the Medicare enrollee.

Often, when the group coverage is terminated, Medicare is not notified. So, bills go to the wrong place and are not properly paid. According to Medicare's records, the senior citizen still has coverage from a private group health insurance plan. So, Medicare believes that Medicare is the secondary insurer.

When the senior citizen terminates the private insurance coverage, Medicare becomes the primary insurer. But, often Medicare does not get notified of this.

If you are enrolled in Medicare and your private group insurance coverage ends, get a letter of termination from the private insurer and send a copy of the letter to Medicare with a note that advises that from the termination date onward, Medicare is your primary insurer.

In the note, remind Medicare to reprocess any claims that have come to Medicare since the date of termination of the private group insurance coverage. There are big differences in the calculations and Medicare payments between Medicare as a secondary and Medicare as a primary insurer of a senior citizen.

Follow this advice, and you can avoid a lot of billing problems.

Note: Woodrow Wilcox is the senior problem resolution officer at the largest senior citizen oriented insurance agency in the Midwest.

Written and distributed by Woodrow Wilcox