From Peter’s Desk by Peter Laverty

Medical ID theft and fraud are on the rise — and the statistics are staggering. These crimes have nearly doubled in the last five years. Medicare recently reported that Medical ID theft and fraud cost (the 2.3 million victims) about $20 billion in out-of-pocket expenses. The introduction of new Medicare numbers is the Center for Medicare Services direct result of facing this issue head-on.

Medicare Made Easy has this to say about Medicare Identity theft:

“Medical identity theft involves the theft of Personally Identifiable Information, such as the name, Social Security number and birthdate and or the Protected Health Information of another person for personal gain. When this information is used to obtain medical services, prescription drugs, insurance, or any other financial gains, it’s called medical fraud, and when it is involved with Medicare, it is called Medicare fraud.”

The harm of medical theft and fraud doesn’t stop at a financial loss. It can affect the victim’s health as well. For example, when the fraudster uses another person’s identity or personal information to get medical services, the fraudster’s diagnosis, health information cost, and even illegal drug use may get added to the medical record of the victim, or may lead to future misdiagnosis, mistreatment, and delayed healthcare for the victim.

Protect Your Private Information!

Thieves find many ways to try to get your personal medical and financial information. They may call you offering free medical services. They may show up on your doorstep selling Medicare-related products. They may even pose as Medicare representatives.

Following a few tips may help keep your personal information safe.

1. Don’t give your personal information, such as your Medicare, credit card, or bank account numbers to someone who calls or comes to your home uninvited. They may say they are from Medicare, your bank, or other trusted source. Neither your bank nor Medicare will ever call you asking for this information. Don’t worry about appearing rude. Hang up the phone or close the door.

2. Don’t respond to emails asking for Medicare, credit card, or bank account numbers.

3. Don’t give your Medicare number to anyone other than your doctor or another authorized Medicare provider.

4. Medicare or your private insurance provider sends you periodic statements detailing the health care you have received. Review the statements as soon as you receive them. Follow up on anything you see that you don’t understand.

5. Review your credit card and bank statements as soon as they arrive. If something doesn’t look right, call the credit card company or your bank right away.

6. Don’t give your Medicare information away in exchange for free medical services or products. If the service or product is free, they do not need your insurance information. This may be another scam to get your Medicare number.

7. Shred or tear up anything that has your personal information on it.

8. Store your Medicare, credit card, and bank account information in a safe place.

If you are the victim of any identity theft, report it to the Federal Trade Commission at www.ftc.gov/idtheft or call 1-877-438-4338. If you are the victim of Medicare fraud, you can call the Medicare helpline to report it (1-800-MEDICARE or 1-800-633-4227, TTY 1-877-486-2048, 24 hours a day, seven days a week).

UMC Health System Seniors Are Special is a service of UMC Health System and Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center

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flu season is here. as long as flu viruses keep circulating, it’s not too late to get vaccinated. flu shots are free for people with medicare once per flu season, when you get it from doctors or other health care providers that take medicare.

there are many reasons to get a flu vaccine. it can reduce your risk of flu illness, doctors’ visits, and missed work due to the flu. and, if you’re vaccinated and still get the flu, the vaccine can reduce the severity of your illness.

getting vaccinated isn’t just about keeping you healthy; it’s also about helping to protect others around you who may be vulnerable to getting sick. protect yourself and your loved ones — get your free flu shot as soon as possible!
2020 Part A & B Premium & Deductibles Announced

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced the Medicare Part B premium for 2020. Starting January 1, the standard Part B premium will increase from $135.50 to $144.60 per month.

This increase comes on the heels of the recently announced cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for 2020. Next year individuals will see a rise of 1.6% in their Social Security benefits—an average of about $24 per month.

In addition to the updated premium amounts, CMS announced an increase in the Medicare Part B annual deductible, from $185 in 2019 to $198 in 2020, and the Part A deductible increased to $1,408 per benefit period.

SAS Guest Medical Speaker -
Dean Diersing & Brittany Beattie

Dean is the Assistant Director of Physical Medicine and Rehab. Dean will talk about Heart Disease and today’s healthcare. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the US and has been for many years. Dean will dive into current data and research around heart disease. Additionally, it is important to understand the risk factors, symptoms, as well as, primary and secondary prevention options associated with heart diseases. Strong consideration needs to be placed on overall wellbeing while diving into these topics. Join us to find out more about “Heart Disease Trends, Research, and Management - What you need to know to care for your heart!

Brittany is an exercise physiologist within UMC Cardiac Rehab. She has a Bachelor of Arts and Sciences Degree in Kinesiology from Texas Tech University. Brittany has been with UMC Physical Medicine and rehab since 2016. She will join Dean and talk about the well-being and healing of the patients that come through cardiac rehab on a day-to-day basis.

Their program on Cardiovascular Health will begin at 4:00 pm in UMC’s McInturff Conference Center. For additional information, call SAS 806-775-8760.

SAS’s Guest Speaker - Brenda Rose

Hear UMC Director of IT Security and Chief Information Security Officer, Brenda Rose, talk on the topic of Cybersecurity Awareness. Gain an understanding of current cybersecurity issues and threats that impact seniors today as well as needed countermeasures to protect yourself.

With seniors making up one of the fastest-growing groups of Internet users, cybersecurity awareness is essential as a countermeasure to combat cyber-attacks. Learn about potential dangers of phishing attacks, unsecured Wi-Fi networks, as well as how to reduce becoming a victim to such cyber-attacks.

Brenda Rose’s presentation will begin at 3:00 PM Wednesday, February 12th in the McInturff Conference Center. Brenda’s program is followed by Dean Diersing and Brittany Beattie about Cardiovascular health. This free program is open to the public; for information, contact SAS at 775-8760.
According to research presented last fall at the American Heart Association’s annual meeting, more than 70 percent of the 103 million American adults who have hypertension could get it under control by doing one simple thing: monitoring it at home.

“It’s important to do this, especially if you’ve already been diagnosed with high blood pressure, or if your doctor is trying to figure out whether you have it,” says internist Michael Hochman, director of the Gehr Family Center for Health Systems Science at Keck Medicine of USC in Los Angeles. “This way, you can make sure that you’re on the right medications, at the appropriate doses, or, on the flip side, that you’re not taking medications unnecessarily.”

Strapping on that arm cuff monitor at home can also give a more accurate picture of your blood pressure than occasional office visits alone. At a doctor’s office, some will experience “white coat hypertension,” where their blood pressure shoots up in a way it doesn’t when they take a reading from home. And about 12 percent of American adults will experience the reverse, called masked hypertension, which means getting normal readings at a physician’s office but higher ones at home.

Because of these variations, as well as several other reasons, experts say that people whose blood pressure is creeping up into the range of 130/80 mm Hg or higher should make sure they’re monitoring themselves at home. Here are five things you should know about how to do so correctly:

Home blood pressure monitors come in arm cuff, wrist cuff, and finger models. Of the three, an automatic upper-arm cuff-style model is the way to go, advises Luke Laffin, a cardiologist at Cleveland Clinic. (Wrist and finger models produce less reliable readings.) Make sure the cuff fits: If it’s too large or small, you could get the wrong reading.

Before using a monitor for the first time, have your doctor’s office check it against their model, says Laffin. A 2016 study found that about a third of home blood pressure monitors were off by at least five points. “We usually check a patient’s blood pressure with our machine, then about two minutes later, check it on their monitor,” he says. “If their systolic [upper number] reading is within about 10 mm, it’s accurate enough to use.” Also a good idea: Have a doctor or nurse observe you taking your blood pressure reading, to make sure you’re doing it correctly.

You shouldn’t smoke, consume caffeine or exercise within 30 minutes of checking your blood pressure. If you have to urinate, do so before taking a reading. Measuring blood pressure with a full bladder can add 10-15 points to your reading, according to the American Heart Association, how you sit also matters. Slouching or sitting with your feet unsupported can raise your reading by five to 10 points, and crossed legs can increase your reading by anywhere from two to eight points.

For the best results, sit in a chair with your back supported, feet flat, and legs uncrossed. Your arm should be supported on a flat surface (such as a table) with the upper arm at heart level. Don’t multitask during the reading, either. Talking to your partner or chatting on the phone while taking your blood pressure can add 10-15 points to your number. Stay silent and still. Finally, put the cuff on bare skin — strapping it on top of clothing, rather than a bare arm, can add 10-40 mm Hg to a measurement.

If you’re monitoring your blood pressure at home, make sure you take it at the same time daily. There’s also no need to take it more frequently than once a day. “I have many patients who are overzealous and take their blood pressure three to four times a day, which drives them nuts because it’s impossible to make sure that you’ve been doing all the things you’re supposed to do — like resting for five minutes and cutting out caffeine for 30 minutes — that many times a day,” says Anuradha Lala-Trindade, a cardiologist at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City. In the morning, before you’ve eaten or had your morning coffee, it is an ideal time to take a reading.

You should record the results; this will allow you to keep a record that you can bring to your appointments. If any one reading seems off, don’t throw it away. Keep it with the rest and talk to your doctor about it at your next appointment. If your blood pressure readings suddenly exceed 180/120 mm Hg, wait five minutes, and test again. If the next reading is still unusually high, contact your doctor immediately.

**SAS Cuts Back on Newsletter Mailings**

We ask everyone that can receive our newsletter by email to do so. We are being asked to reduce our printing and mailing cost this year. If you are, please send your email address to Peter.Laverty@umchealthsystem.com.

If you live outside of Lubbock County, the newsletter is available ONLY by email.

To keep our mailing list current, we are asking for your support. Please notify us immediately of any changes in your address, if you are receiving more than one copy or if you no longer wish to receive the newsletter. Also, please inform us of any demographic changes such as a name change due to marriage, the death of a member, or anything that might affect your mailing address. Your help is appreciated.
Have you ever stepped out of your comfort zone? I have a difficult time stepping out of my comfort zone. Recently, I tried a new exercise class, and want to share my experience with you. Over the years, I have always been one to take the fast-paced type classes, like Zumba, Boot Camp, Spin Classes, etc.; however, I decided to slow myself down and try T’ai Chi Chih®. This class was definitely out of my comfort zone!

Does this sound familiar? How often do you think about doing something out of your comfort zone or trying something new only to change your mind or stop before even giving it a try? We see it all the time at the UMC Activities Center, people come into the center weekly talking about starting exercise or starting a particular class, and then we never see them again. We also have people who find out our exercise program is all done in a group setting, and are out the door before even observing classes.

I get it! Getting out of my comfort zone was difficult; I had to change my mindset. The first few classes were hard, I was always overdoing the movements and felt very clumsy, but just like my fast-paced classes, one day it clicked! I survived getting out of my comfort zone and at my most recent doctor’s appointment, I found out that my blood pressure had dropped! Now, I look forward to my classes and working on my movements.

Getting out of your comfort zone is never easy. We can usually think of a million excuses as to why our comfort level does not need to be toyed with and only one or two reasons to risk the uneasiness that ensues. It is up to each of us to decide what we can and cannot do. But, usually, there is a way to push ourselves and remain comfortable.

How can you get out of your comfort zone? 1. Give it a try, remind yourself that you are simply giving a new situation a try. 2. Devise a plan, having a plan helps you leave your comfort zone slowly. 3. Seek support, talk about what you would like to do with friends or family. Ask them to join you.

The UMC Activities Center offers T’ai Chi Chih® with Larry on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9:30AM. A mix of gentle movements that focus on balance and the circulation of energy or chi. The class involves slow, continuous, circular, shifting movement to stimulate inner energy chi flow. May be performed standing or sitting. Intensity Level: Low

T’ai Chi Chih® may be ideal for individuals looking to improve their strength, balance, sleep, or for a mind-body experience without having to get onto the floor. A study from Emory University showed people older than 70 years old who practiced a form of T’ai Chi had 47.5% fewer falls than those who did not. It is believed to be because in T’ai Chi Chih® one is constantly shifting their weight forward and back and even some side to side. Building strength in your feet, ankles and legs improving coordination and nerve and muscle communication (hss.edu). Come try T’ai Chi Chih® with Larry!

For more information on any of our classes at the UMC Activities Center, feel free to stop by and visit us at 5217 82nd St (Southwest corner of 82nd & Slide, next to FoodKing) or call us at (806)783-8829.

Mike Greer Lecture: On Thursday, February 20th at 1:00 pm, Mike Greer, Ph.D. will present Exercise is More Than Just Physical at the UMC Activities Center. Recently, I had the pleasure of meeting Mike and discussing his inspirational experiences in life and on exercise/wellness and would like to encourage others to hear his story. In September 2018, Mike completed his 400th triathlon just three months shy of his 80th birthday, to say that he is an avid fitness person is an understatement! Come join us and listen to Mike’s passion for aging and exercise. For more information, you can contact the UMC Activities Center at 783-8829.

Matter of Balance:

FREE CLASS

The UMC Activities Center is joining UMC’s Trauma and Injury Prevention Department to host A Matter of Balance beginning in February. This 8-session class is a free program where participants will gain confidence and reduce their risk of falls. You should attend A Matter of Balance if you are concerned about falls, have fallen in the past, or have restricted activities because of worry about falling. Preregistration for this class is required. Classes will be held Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:00 am-11:00 am February 11th – March 5th. For more information or to pre-register, you can contact the UMC Activities Center at 783-8829.

UMC’s Better Breathers Club to meet at UMC Activities Center

The UMC Better Breathers Club is a support group for people with Chronic Lung disease such as COPD, Asthma, Pulmonary Fibrosis, and Lung Cancer. Joining is free! Learn to manage your lung disease and live better. The Better Breathers Club meets the second Monday of every month from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm at the UMC Activities Center at 5217 82nd Street, in Rockridge Plaza. Our next meeting will be Monday, February 10, 2020. For additional information, contact Lori Stroud at 775-8950.
Seniors Are Special’s Monthly Seminar
Wednesday, February 12, 2020
3:00 PM – 5:00 PM
McInturff Conference Center at UMC

Lifestyle Topic: 3:00 PM
Brenda Rose – UMC IT Security
“Cyber Security, How to Protect Your Computer from Attacks”

Medical Topic: 4:00 PM
Dean Diersing, MS, ACSM-RCEP, EP-C, CCRP, FAACVPR
Supervisor - Cardiac & Pulmonary Rehabilitation, Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation at UMC
“Heart Disease Trends, Research, and Management - What You Need to Know to Care for Your Heart!”

Join us for Seniors are Special’s monthly educational seminars. These seminars meet on the second Wednesday of each month beginning at 3:00 PM in UMC’s McInturff Conference Center. The meetings are free, open to the public, and no reservations are necessary. Please bring a friend. For further information on these meetings, call SAS at 806-775-8760.

Shuttle Service Available for Monthly Medical Seminars
Shuttle service is provided free from Tech’s West Parking Lot to the McInturff Conference Center for the SAS monthly meeting.

SAS is working with “Lubbock Shuttle” to provide free shuttle service between 2:30 PM and 5:30 PM for our medical seminar guests. The shuttle will pick up members at the Texas Tech parking lot located WEST of the Texas Tech Parkway, off of 10th Street. Turn West away from the hospital at the 10th Street & Texas Tech Parkway light. The parking lot is located one block down on your left-hand side of the street. Follow the SAS parking signs. The shuttle will take you to and from the lot to the McInturff Conference Center. You are also free to park in any of UMC’s parking lots.

Valet parking is also available at UMC’s front entrance for a fee of $5.00 for those preferring to ship the hassle of finding a parking space or taking the free shuttle.

Happy Valentine’s Day