



Health Consumer Alliance

Medicare Part D Findings: March 1 - April 14, 2006

Introduction

The findings below are based on data collected by the Health Consumer Alliance. This information reflects Medicare Part D problems reported to HCA between March 1, 2006 and April 14, 2006. During this time period, HCA provided assistance to 245 consumers with Medicare Part D problems. 73% of those consumers were eligible for both Medi-Cal and Medicare and are “Dual Eligibles.” These findings focus on service problems, meaning problems reported by individuals who have Medicare Part D Coverage.

Although the Health Consumer Centers continue to receive a number of calls regarding Medicare Part D, we believe that the number of calls has been significantly reduced due to the State’s emergency coverage.

Finding #1: Consumers remain unaware of how to use Medicare Part D or require education.

39% of callers with Medicare Part D coverage reported difficulty in using Medicare Part D. With the end of transitional supplies, many dual eligibles have contacted HCA with questions about how to proceed or what to do next. Dual eligibles continue to have difficulty understanding Medicare Part D including understanding what they should and should not pay for at the pharmacy, what emergency process the pharmacies were supposed to use, and how to obtain refunds.

Finding #2: Care under Medicare Part D is unaffordable for many consumers due to co-payments and deductibles.

16% of callers with Medicare Part D coverage contacted the Health Consumer Alliance because care was unaffordable under Part D. Dual eligible beneficiaries have become distraught as co-payments have forced some to choose between types of medications and some have had to choose between medication, rent and food. Many dual eligibles have reported paying out of pocket for medications or walking away from the pharmacy without medication because they are unable to afford the co-payments.

Finding #3: Consumers continue to receive care denials for their prescription medications.

11.6% of consumers with Medicare Part D coverage contacted the Health Consumer Alliance because a prescription medication had been denied under their Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Plan. HCA callers have increasingly called with problems involving prior authorization. Many consumers simply believe that their prescription was denied and were not informed of how to navigate the prior authorization process. Other consumers have experienced care denials with excluded drugs that should continue to be covered by Medi-Cal.

Finding #4: Consumers continue to experience difficulty enrolling and disenrolling in Medicare Part D plans.

8.7% of consumers contacting the Health Consumer Alliance with Medicare Part D coverage were having difficulty enrolling or disenrolling in a Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Plan. Some consumers have had difficulty with prescription drug plans who will not let them disenroll or have a lengthy disenrollment process. In addition, some consumers have received letters from their other insurance plans, such as CalPers, who are threatening to disenroll them if they maintain Medicare Part D coverage.

Finding #5: A number of consumers continue to report billing problems under Medicare Part D.

7.5% of Health Consumer Alliance consumers with Medicare Part D coverage reported a billing problem during this time period. Many dual eligibles report being charged more than the \$1 to \$5 co-payments when pharmacy systems fail to reflect beneficiaries LIS eligibility status.

Finding #6: Language, Cultural and Racial barriers continue to impede consumers access to medications under Medicare Part D.

6.6% of problems reported to the Health Consumer Alliance involved language, cultural or racial barriers that consumers faced in trying to obtain prescription drug services under Medicare Part D.

Finding #7: A number of consumers have been unable to access services because they have not received a Medicare Part D Card.

4.9% of individuals who contacted the Health Consumer alliance during this time period could not access Medicare Part D services solely because they had not received their Medicare Part D card despite being enrolled. Consumers have reported long delays in receiving their card.

Finding # 8: Some consumers have reported delays in receiving their medications or that they can obtain only a reduced quantity or the generic medication.

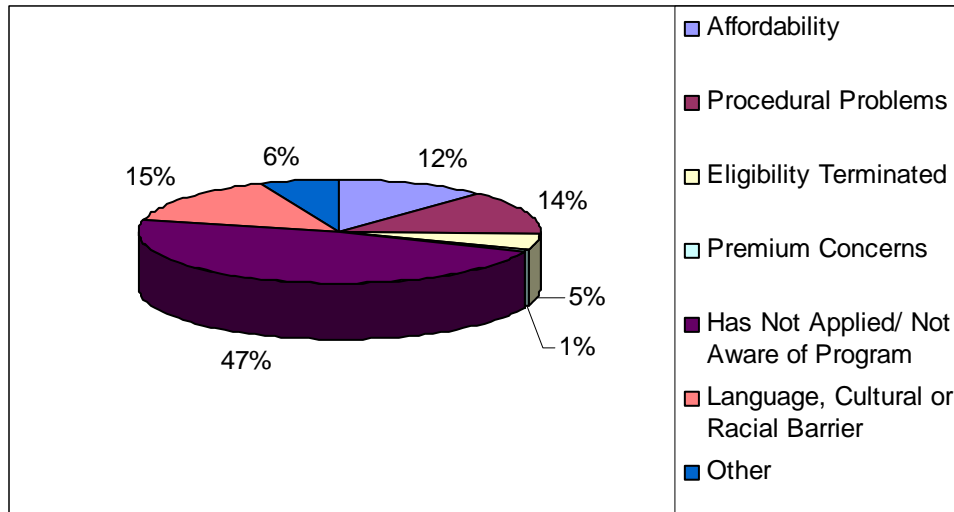
3% of consumers contacting the Health Consumer Alliance during this time period reported that they were either delayed in getting their medication or they were only able to obtain either a reduced quantity of medications or the generic version or medication and not the brand name.

Health Consumer Alliance

The Health Consumer Alliance is comprised of 11 organizations which include: Fresno Health Consumer Center; Imperial Valley Health Consumer Center; Health Consumer Center of Los Angeles; Orange County Health Consumer Action Center; Health Rights Hotline; Consumer Center for Health Education and Advocacy; Community Health Advocacy Project, Health Consumer Center of San Mateo County; the National Health Law Program and Western Center on Law and Poverty. Together, we cover 13 California counties, and approximately 3/5ths of the low-income individuals in the state.

The data reported in these findings was collected by the HCA database and the Health Rights Hotline Database. These two databases track all consumers who receive assistance from a Health Consumer Center.

Eligibility Problems



Service Problems

