



Powered by The Valley Health System and Kindred Hospitals



July 2024

# Newsletter

Volume 109

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## #VegasStrong

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## CONSUMER ALERT

## Urinary Catheter Scams

**SCAMMERS** are targeting Medicare enrollees by offering free services, medical equipment, or gifts cards in order to obtain their Medicare number to commit fraud.



Scammers target Medicare enrollees through various communication methods to obtain enrollee's personal information.



Scammers steal or obtain Medicare numbers and other personal information.



Scammers then bill Medicare for medical equipment that's unnecessary or not provided.

**REPORT FRAUD: TIPS.HHS.GOV | 1-800-447-8477**

OIG.HHS.GOV

## ATTENTION: DME FRAUD SCHEME UNCOVERED

In early February, it was reported that the National Association of ACOs (NAACOS) had uncovered an alleged fraud scheme that could cost Medicare billions of dollars.

NAACOS noticed a massive spike in Medicare claims for catheters. Catheters are generally low-cost items and, therefore, may not be carefully scrutinized when ordered. However, when there were over 400,000 *additional* claims for catheters over two years, the overall cost soared.

Silver State ACO is sharing this information to advise Participant Practices to be alert to any unusual claims or requests for DME, particularly catheters. Patients should be made aware of this, as well.

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Providers should warn patients about possible fraud by discussing it or posting a notice.

Tips for your patients

- If you receive a call from someone offering you free urinary catheters or other Durable Medical Equipment and services that will be billed to Medicare, hang up immediately.
- Be suspicious of anyone who offers you free medical equipment and then requests your Medicare number. If your personal information is compromised, it may be used in other fraud schemes.
- If medical equipment is delivered to you, don't accept it unless it was ordered by your physician. Refuse the delivery or return it to the sender. Keep a record of the sender's name and the date you returned the items.
- Review any Explanation of Benefits documents you receive. Scan for any supplies you did not order.

**If you suspect Medicare fraud, report it immediately online or call the HHS-OIG Hotline at 1-800-HHS-TIPS (1-800-447-8477).**

[Video on How to Stop DME Fraud](#)

**Spotlight: Controlling High Blood Pressure**



Millions of people across the world suffer from hypertension, the medical term for high blood pressure. Based on current statistics from the [American Health Association \(AHA\)](#), almost half of American adults have high blood pressure, yet only about one in four have their condition under control. [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), estimates that each year we spend \$131 billion dollars nationally towards high blood pressure related expenses. As hypertension is often referred to as the “*Silent Killer*” it is critical to understand this disease and what can be done to manage it.

Hypertension usually develops over time with family history, age, and race influencing the risk of developing the disease. However, medical conditions and lifestyle choices can contribute to the risk as well. [The CDC estimates that about 6 out of 10 people who have diabetes also have high blood pressure.](#) Other behaviors that can contribute are: unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, obesity, alcohol, and tobacco use. Severe complications can also occur in those diagnosed with

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uncontrolled high blood pressure such as heart disease, kidney failure, stroke, vision loss and other serious health conditions.

In 2017, the [American College of Cardiology](#) and the American Health Association provided new guidelines that categorized blood pressure into specific stages as indicated in the chart below:

## Blood Pressure Categories



| BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY                               | SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number) |        | DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number) |
|---|-------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------|
| NORMAL  | LESS THAN 120                 | and    | LESS THAN 80                   |
| ELEVATED  | 120-129                       | and    | LESS THAN 80                   |
| HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1            | 130-139                       | or     | 80-89                          |
| HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2            | 140 OR HIGHER                 | or     | 90 OR HIGHER                   |
| HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS (consult your doctor immediately) | HIGHER THAN 180               | and/or | HIGHER THAN 120                |

©American Heart Association, 05-10640-020

[heart.org/bplevels](http://heart.org/bplevels)

The good news is that high blood pressure can often be controlled, and steps can be taken to lower the risk of complications.

### Strategies for Controlling High Blood Pressure:

- **Healthy Balanced Diet:** Adopting a diet that is rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains can significantly lower blood pressure. The [DASH \(Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension\)](#) diet is particularly effective.
- **Exercise:** Engaging in regular physical activity, such as walking, for at least 30 minutes 5 days a week can help lower blood pressure.
- **Weight Management:** Maintaining a healthy weight or losing weight can help control blood pressure.
- **Limit Alcohol and Quit Smoking:** Reducing alcohol intake and quitting smoking can improve overall heart health and lower blood pressure.
- **Medication Compliance:** In addition to lifestyle changes, medication can help keep blood pressure at a healthy level.

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Understanding the importance high blood pressure has on the Medicare population, The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) requires the ACO to report on the measure, **Controlling High Blood Pressure**. This ensures a focus on continuing to improve and maintain the health of each hypertensive patient.



For this measure, CMS requires patients with an active diagnosis of hypertension **AND** who are between the ages of 18-85 to have an adequately controlled blood pressure reading at the patients most recent visit in 2024. Please note that **CMS considers blood pressure to be “controlled” if it is 139/89 mm Hg or lower**. If no blood pressure reading is documented during 2024, the patients’ blood pressure is assumed to be “not controlled.” By participating practices suggesting effective blood pressure control strategies to their patients and adhering to Medicare guidelines, both patients and healthcare providers can work together to manage hypertension and reduce the risk of serious complications.

Please reach out to your Coordinator if you have any questions or need any assistance understanding the hypertension quality measure.

### ER Utilization

Summer is here! With that comes summer vacation. Providers may be out of the office taking their families on vacation making it difficult to get an appointment at the last minute. Instead of going to the ER for urgent needs suggest to your patients to try using urgent care or calling Dispatch Health instead.



*Dispatch Health provides urgent care to patients in their home.* They can treat a variety of conditions such as: UTI, Dehydration, Flu, Food Poisoning, Nausea, Vomiting, and Diarrhea, Asthma, Sunburns, and many more.

Dispatch Health contact numbers  
Southern NV: 725-246-1973  
Northern NV: 775-442-5872

Encourage your patients to use Urgent Cares or Dispatch Health this summer when they are unable to be seen in your practice timely. To be entered to win a prize at one of the meetings, please respond to the email to which this newsletter was attached with "Let freedom ring" in the subject line.

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## Cybersecurity

Summer is here and many people are thrilled to “get out and go”, especially this year after months of “distancing” from everyone and everything. Remember that cybercriminals do not go on vacation. They sit in their little air-conditioned cubicle looking for ways to steal information. And their “theft” could make your life miserable. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Service’s Office for Civil Rights in Action (OCR) issued a warning about vulnerabilities, especially in network management systems.



Cybercriminals use devious forms of email and phishing campaigns to infect computers allowing them to steal data or to lock the data from its rightful owner, and then demanding ransom to release it. Medical practices are particularly vulnerable as the data has a high resale value as well as being so important to the rightful owner that a practice may be willing to pay dearly to have access restored.



And, that doesn’t even speak to the tremendous risk posed to the patients if their medical records become unavailable or are compromised in any way. The best defense to any computer-generated threat remains engaged, educated and attentive staff. Repetition – particularly when done creatively – does work!

## Practice Meeting

The third round of Practice Meetings for 2024 will be held on July 31<sup>st</sup> in Southern Nevada and August 1<sup>st</sup> in Northern Nevada, respectively. Please be sure to attend. The meetings are a great opportunity to learn how to improve scores, meet CMS requirements, and become acquainted with other Participants. We can all learn from one another. See more details, below.

### SOUTHERN NEVADA

Wednesday, July 31, 2024

Wednesday, November 6, 2024

All Southern Nevada Practice meetings will be held at Summerlin Hospital and begin at 11:30 a.m. Lunch is served.

## NORTHERN NEVADA

*Thursday, August 1, 2024*

*Thursday, November 7, 2024*

Northern Nevada Practice Meetings are held at Northern Nevada Sparks Medical Building, Suite 201. Meet & Greet begins at 5 pm; Meeting begins at 5:30.

## SILVER STATE ACO Compliance Line

**702-751-0834**

Available for secure reporting of any suspected compliance issues, without fear of retribution.



To cancel receiving the monthly Silver State ACO Newsletter please respond with "Unsubscribe" in the subject box.

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