



Featured Link – Senior Medicare Patrol

Written On October 19, 2010 By [Bob Kraft](#)

I had occasion last week to listen to an excellent presentation by volunteer Gary Travers, a member of the SMP, or Senior Medicare Patrol program. I have to admit I was not familiar with this group's work, but their goal is to "...teach Medicare beneficiaries how to protect their personal identity, identify and report errors on their health care bills and identify deceptive health care practices, such as illegal marketing, providing unnecessary or inappropriate services and charging for services that were never provided." SMP is funded by the U.S. Administration on Aging.

This is an extremely worthwhile organization, and I believe the volunteers who make educational presentations for SMP genuinely care about the senior citizens and others who receive either Medicare

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or Medicaid benefits. I didn't detect any hidden messages or sales pitches. SMP just wants people to know their rights and responsibilities, to help seniors guard against identity theft, and to report fraud in the Medicare system. That fraud is rampant among unscrupulous doctors and hospitals, and, along with legitimate billing errors costs taxpayers billions of dollars each year, Here is some information from the SMP site:

Who Are the SMPs?

The SMP programs, also known as Senior Medicare Patrol programs, help Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries avoid, detect, and prevent health care fraud. In doing so, they not only protect older persons, they also help preserve the integrity of the Medicare and Medicaid programs. Because this work often requires face-to-face contact to be most effective, SMPs nationwide recruit and teach nearly 4,500 volunteers every year to help in this effort. Most SMP volunteers are both retired and Medicare beneficiaries and thus well-positioned to assist their peers.

SMP staff and their highly trained volunteers conduct outreach to Medicare beneficiaries in their communities through group presentations, exhibiting at community events, answering calls to the SMP help lines and one-on-one counseling. Their primary goal is to teach Medicare beneficiaries how to protect their personal identity,

identify and report errors on their health care bills and identify deceptive health care practices, such as illegal marketing, providing unnecessary or inappropriate services and charging for services that were never provided. In some cases, SMPs do more than educate: When Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries are unable to act on their own behalf to address these problems, the SMPs work with family caregivers and others to address the problems, and if necessary, make referrals to outside organizations who are able to intervene.

How They Work

SMPs are funded by the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA). They receive technical assistance from the National Consumer Protection Technical Resource Center. Financial support from AoA and technical support from The Center are not enough to maintain the accomplishments of the SMPs. SMPs rely on the efforts of thousands of volunteers and hundreds of partnerships at the community, state and national levels. For more details about volunteer opportunities available within the SMP program, [click here](#). If you are interested in ways your organization can partner with SMPs, [click here](#).

SMP activities support AoA's goals of promoting increased choice and greater independence among older adults. The activities of the SMP

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program also serve to enhance the financial, emotional, physical and mental well-being of older adults — thereby increasing their capacity to maintain security and independence in retirement and to make better financial and health care choices. For more information about the SMP program from AoA, [click here](#). To locate an SMP in your area, [click here](#).