

FALL 2011



Inside Medicare Rights

FROM THE DESK OF JOE BAKER



Medicare turned 46 this summer, and its birthday present (if one can call it that) was a deficit reduction/debt ceiling compromise that avoided making immediate deep cuts to Medicare or Medicaid. However, the compromise leaves these crucial

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programs vulnerable to future spending cuts. Over the next few months, a new bipartisan "supercommittee" of 12 senators and representatives is tasked with further reducing the deficit by \$1.2-\$1.5 trillion in additional spending cuts or revenue. We at

the Medicare Rights Center will work tirelessly to ensure that Medicare is preserved, and will speak out against proposals that unfairly shift the burden of the deficit to beneficiaries.

Read our fact sheet "**The Debt Deal and Medicare**" to learn more: ow.ly/61M9q.

Every day, we hear from Medicare beneficiaries who can't afford to pay for their health care. Half of all people with Medicare have incomes of less than \$22,000 per year, and if their Medicare costs increase, these older adults and people with disabilities would be forced to choose between health care and other necessities, including food and housing. We remain committed to speaking out against proposals that would shift costs to people with Medicare and their families, reduce their access to affordable care, and fail to address the root cause of the problem—growing costs in the health care sector overall. Further, we believe that any deficit-reduction deal must maintain a balanced approach that includes higher taxes for the wealthiest Americans and the closing of tax loopholes enjoyed by corporations and other businesses.

As the debate over deficit reduction continues, we pledge to inform people with Medicare simply and accurately about what emerging proposals would mean for their health care access.

2011
Awards Dinner

*Honoring Carol Raphael
President and CEO of the Visiting Nurse
Service of New York
and
Rob Mencher
Medicare Rights Center Volunteer*

You're Invited

Monday, October 17
Mandarin Oriental, NYC
6:00 p.m. Cocktails
7:00 p.m. Dinner

There is still time to register!
For more information, visit
www.medicarerights.org/events
or call 212-204-6223.

National Focus: Atlantic Philanthropies Grant

Thanks to a three-year, \$750,000 grant from the Atlantic Philanthropies, the Medicare Rights Center is expanding its Seniors Out Speaking (SOS) program and launching/supporting Medicare Advocacy Coalitions in five states. Through Seniors Out Speaking, Medicare Rights works with host organizations nationally to enlist, train and track the outcomes of SOS volunteers as they lead Medicare Minutes for their friends and neighbors, helping them understand their health insurance coverage. The SOS model builds camaraderie among older adults, strengthens community-based organizations, and encourages participants to become advocates for their own health care and that of their peers.

Medicare Advocacy Coalitions, meanwhile, bring together consumer advocates, policymakers and other stakeholders to identify Medicare-related policy challenges and pursue needed reforms, for instance related to enrollment in low-income programs or implementation of the Affordable Care Act. One model for these coalitions is the Medicare Rights-led New York State Medicare Savings Coalition, which in recent years has successfully advocated for the elimination of the asset test and face-to-face interview for individuals applying for Medicare low-income programs.

The Atlantic Philanthropies grant has enabled Medicare Rights to begin SOS and coalition-related work in Alabama, Florida, Kansas, Maine and Wisconsin. Current on-the-ground partners include the Alabama State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), the Florida Community Health Action Information Network (CHAIN), Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) in Kansas and Maine, Maine Legal Services for the Elderly, the Alliance for Retired Americans, and the Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups. In June, Medicare Rights hired Krystal Knight, MPH, as its State Program and Policy Coordinator to lead this work; Ms. Knight is based in Washington, DC, and works closely with other project staff, state partners and federal officials.

By the Numbers

Last year, Medicare Rights served over **37,000 consumers and professionals** through its helplines, trainings and presentations.

Testimony at the Senate

On June 23 in Washington, DC, Bruce Vladeck, PhD, chair of the Medicare Rights Center Board of Directors, testified at a United States Senate Committee on Finance hearing titled “**Health Care Entitlements: The Road Forward.**”

His testimony addressed the need to preserve Medicare for the generations of



Dr. Bruce Vladeck

beneficiaries who have paid taxes into the system. Identifying the cause of Medicare’s financial troubles—increasing costs in the health care sector and persisting problems with federal budgetary

politics—Dr. Vladeck proposed delivery system reforms and other solutions that would simultaneously protect beneficiaries and decrease health care costs.

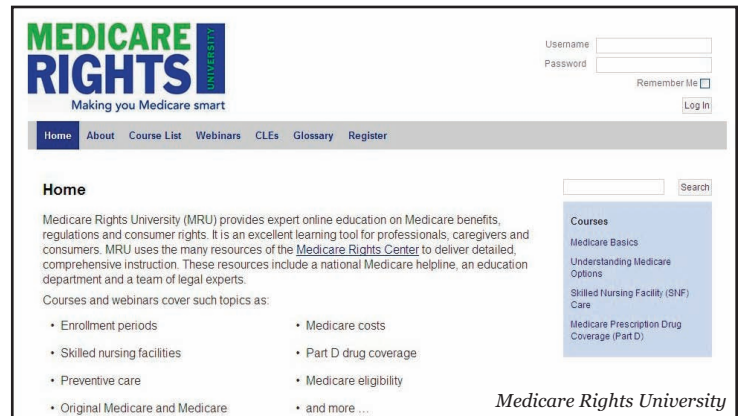
Read Dr. Vladeck’s entire testimony here: ow.ly/6j4yk.

Professional Services Update

Medicare Rights has developed a number of resources designed to help professionals stay up-to-date on changes to Medicare and thus more effectively serve their clients.

Medicare Rights University (www.medicarerightsuniversity.org) is a series of comprehensive online courses on key Medicare topics. Featuring traditional-format, webinar and video trainings, Medicare Rights University (MRU) provides detailed, comprehensive online instruction on Medicare benefits and rights. Courses and webinars feature consistently updated topics that are essential to understanding and navigating health coverage. They include: Medicare Basics, Enrollment Periods, Medicare Costs, Skilled Nursing Facilities, Part D Drug Coverage, and Preventive Care. MRU unravels the complexities of Medicare through straightforward lessons, case examples and quizzes, all of which help professionals learn Medicare efficiently and soundly, and translate theory into practice.

A new **Continuing Legal Education** course will launch in mid-September. An exciting addition



The screenshot shows the Medicare Rights University website. At the top left is the logo "MEDICARE RIGHTS UNIVERSITY" with the tagline "Making you Medicare smart". To the right are login fields for Username and Password, with a "Remember Me" checkbox and a "Log In" button. Below the logo is a navigation menu with links: Home, About, Course List, Webinars, CLEs, Glossary, Register. The main content area is titled "Home" and contains a search bar, a description of MRU's mission, and a list of topics covered in courses and webinars. The list includes: Enrollment periods, Medicare costs, Skilled nursing facilities, Part D drug coverage, Preventive care, Medicare eligibility, Original Medicare and Medicare, and more... A sidebar on the right lists "Courses" such as Medicare Basics, Understanding Medicare Options, Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) Care, and Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage (Part D). The footer of the page reads "Medicare Rights University".

to the resources Medicare Rights provides to professionals and advocates, "Let's Learn Medicare: Medicare Primer for Attorneys" provides an in-depth look at how Medicare law was created, as well as at the various entities that are responsible for regulating the different parts of Medicare. Specifically, the course will offer a nuanced review of Medicare basics, common reasons people with Medicare seek legal advice, an overview of Medicare law, and guidelines to researching answers to Medicare problems. The course will be presented by New York State Policy Director Doug Goggin-Callahan, Esq., and Client Services Counsel Casey Schwarz, Esq.

A Date Change for Fall Open Enrollment

Starting in 2011, Fall Open Enrollment Period (also known as the Annual Coordinated Election Period, or ACEP) begins on **October 15** and lasts through **December 7**.

During Fall Open Enrollment, people with Medicare can change their Medicare health and drug coverage options without restriction. Changes will take effect January 1, 2012.

For more information, go to www.medicareinteractive.org.

Joe Baker Keynotes NJFA Conference

On June 3 in Jamesburg, NJ, Medicare Rights President Joe Baker was featured as a keynote speaker at the annual conference of the New Jersey Foundation for Aging (NJFA). He spoke about changes enacted by the Affordable Care Act, and what to expect in health care as the new provisions are implemented. NJFA is dedicated to providing ongoing financial support for senior services in New Jersey.



Left to right: NJFA Board Chair Roberto Muniz, Joe Baker and NJFA Board Member Dr. John Heath

Read our 2010 Annual Report
online at: ow.ly/5XJsi



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Becoming a monthly donor of \$10, \$25, \$50 or more is an easy, affordable way to support the work of the Medicare Rights Center while ensuring us a steady source of income.

Note: Many companies match their employees' gifts to nonprofit organizations. If your employer has a matching gift program, your gift to the Medicare Rights Center could be doubled or tripled.

To make a monthly contribution to the Medicare Rights Center, visit:

www.medicarights.org/support-us

Medicare Rights has joined the social media revolution.

Join us on Facebook and Twitter to:

- get the latest updates, including exclusive content;
- connect with other advocates, caregivers, professionals and people with Medicare;
- raise your voice to protect the Medicare program.

Watch our latest videos on YouTube and connect to our professional network on LinkedIn.

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The Medicare Rights Center is a national, nonprofit consumer service organization that works to ensure access to affordable health care for older adults and people with disabilities through counseling and advocacy, educational programs and public policy initiatives.

MEDICARE RIGHTS CENTER
Getting Medicare right