

The SMP SCOOP



PROTECT DETECT REPORT

SPRING 2024

The Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Scoop is prepared by the GWAAR SMP Team to help Medicare beneficiaries and their advocates prevent, detect, and report health care fraud, abuse, and errors.

Please feel free to share this publication with others who may benefit from its contents.

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Preventing Medicare Fraud

Medicare Part B Preventive Benefits

By the GWAAR Legal Services Team

Did you know that Medicare Part B covers many preventive benefits at no cost to beneficiaries, as long as the services are provided by a doctor or other qualified health care provider who accepts Medicare assignment? These preventive services include:

- Abdominal aortic aneurysm screenings for at-risk individuals (with a referral from a doctor or other qualified health care provider)
- Alcohol misuse screenings and counseling (up to four free counseling sessions per year)
- Bone mass measurements once every 24 months to check if an individual is at risk for broken bones (for people with certain medical conditions or who meet certain criteria)



- Cardiovascular behavioral therapy (discussion of aspirin use, blood pressure check, tips on eating well, etc.) one time per year to help lower the risk for developing cardiovascular disease
- Cardiovascular disease screenings once every five years that help detect conditions, such as high cholesterol, that may lead to a heart attack or stroke
- Cervical, vaginal, and breast cancer screenings at least once every 24 months
- Colorectal cancer screenings, such as colonoscopies, to help find precancerous growths or find cancer early, when treatment is most effective. Note, however, that if a polyp or other suspicious tissue is found and removed during a screening procedure, the patient must pay 15% of the Medicare-approved amount for doctors' services and hospital fees

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The Wisconsin SMP program is supported, in part by grant number 90MPPG0102-01-00, from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official Administration for Community Living policy.



PROTECT DETECT REPORT

Medicare Part B Preventive Benefits

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- Counseling to prevent tobacco use and tobacco-caused disease, up to eight times per year
- Vaccines, including for COVID-19, flu, Hepatitis B (for those at medium or high risk for Hep B) and pneumococcal infections. Most other recommended adult immunizations (such as for shingles, tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis) are covered by Medicare Part D drug plans.
- COVID-19 monoclonal antibody treatments and products to help fight the disease and keep an individual out of the hospital¹
- Depression screenings (one per year), as long as it is performed in a primary care setting (like a doctor's office) that can provide follow-up treatment and/or referrals, if necessary
- Diabetes self-management training for diagnosed diabetics to learn to cope with and manage the disease, with a written order from the patient's doctor or other health care provider
- Glaucoma test, for those at high-risk, once every 12 months
- Screenings for Hepatitis B and C, as well as HIV and lung cancer, if certain conditions are met
- Mammogram screenings to check for breast cancer – once every 12 months for women 40+, and one baseline mammogram for women ages 35-39
- Behavior change program to help prevent Type 2 diabetes (offered once-per-lifetime to high-risk individuals)
- Nutrition therapy services for individuals with diabetes or kidney disease and those who have had a kidney transplant in the last 36 months, as long as a physician referral is provided
- Obesity screenings and behavioral therapy for those with a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or more, to help individuals lose weight by focusing on diet and exercise. The counseling must be provided in a primary care setting (like a doctor's office), so that an individual's personalized prevention plan can be coordinated with the patient's other care.
- Prostate cancer screenings once every 12 months for men over 50
- Sexually transmitted infection (STI) screenings and counseling for high-risk individuals and those who are pregnant. Medicare covers these tests once every 12 months or at certain times during pregnancy. Medicare also covers up to 2 individual, 20-30 minute, face-to-face, high-intensity behavioral counseling sessions for high-risk adults. To be covered, counseling sessions must be provided in a primary care setting (like a doctor's office). Medicare will not cover counseling as a preventive service in an inpatient setting, such as a skilled nursing facility.
- "Welcome to Medicare" preventive visit during the first 12 months that someone is enrolled in Part B. The visit includes a review of the patient's medical and social history related to health. It also includes education and counseling about preventive services, including certain screenings, shots or vaccines (like flu, pneumococcal, and other recommended shots or vaccines), as well as referrals for other care, if needed.
- Yearly "Wellness" visit after someone has had Part B for longer than 12 months, to develop or update the patient's personalized plan to prevent disease or disability based on current health and risk factors.

¹This treatment will be covered through the end of 2023. In 2024, Original Medicare will cover monoclonal antibody treatments if someone has COVID-19 symptoms. In the case of individuals with weakened immune systems, Part B will continue covering the cost, even following the end of the COVID-19 public health emergency on May 11, 2023.

The Benefits of Playing Pickleball

By Abigail Darwin

We all know that exercise is important, and as we age, physical activity becomes even more valuable for preserving physical and mental health. However, the prospect of getting regular exercise can be daunting when it isn't fun (for example, running countless loops around a track or climbing a stair stepper to nowhere).

This is where pickleball comes in! Pickleball is the fastest growing sport in America. It is a combination of tennis, ping-pong, and badminton. Although pickleball was invented in 1965 just outside Seattle, it has gained increasing popularity in recent years, especially (but not exclusively) among baby boomers. According to the Sports & Fitness Industry Association, the number of pickleball players grew 14.8% between 2020 and 2021. In a 2022 report, the Sports & Fitness Industry Association noted that as of 2022, 4.8 million Americans played pickleball. And, of the 1.4 million "core" participants (those who played 8+ times per year), over half were 55+ years of age, and approximately one-third were 65 or older.

Here are some reasons why pickleball is an ideal sport for older adults:

- **It is a low-impact sport that is relatively easy on the joints.** The smaller court size (44' x 20') and lower net (compared to tennis) and plastic, whiffle-like ball make it easier on the hips, knees, and shoulders, compared to other sports like tennis or basketball. And you can fit about four

standard pickleball courts on a single tennis court! Pickleball entails less running and jumping than tennis, making it less likely to result in injuries. In addition, serving is underhand (not overhand, like in tennis), which makes the game easier to play and less taxing on arm muscles.

- **It can improve health.** Despite being a low-impact sport, it involves a lot of physical movement and can be fast-paced, making it an excellent form of cardio exercise. In a 2016 study published in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*, 12 middle-aged players burned 40% more calories playing pickleball for 30 minutes than by walking for the same amount of time. In addition, a 2018 study in the *International Journal of Research in Exercise Physiology* found that middle-aged and older adults who played one hour of pickleball three days per week for six weeks improved their blood pressure, cholesterol, and cardiorespiratory fitness levels. Maintaining a healthy blood pressure, cholesterol level, and cardiovascular system can help prevent hypertension, stroke, and heart attack.
- **It provides opportunities to be social.** Pickleball is often played as doubles, and often with complete strangers who just happen to also be at the same pickleball courts as you. This means that older adults can make new friends and/or stay connected with family and friends who also enjoy playing the game.

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The Benefits of Playing Pickleball

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- **It boosts mood and reduces the risk of depression** by increasing endorphins and providing opportunities to socialize. A 2018 study published in *Leisure Studies* found that older adults who played in pickleball tournaments had a lower risk of depression.
- **It improves physical coordination and balance.** Pickleball requires the use of quick reflexes and eye-hand/eye-foot coordination. By playing the sport and improving balance and coordination, older adults can reduce their risk of falls and injuries.
- **It provides mental stimulation.** Playing pickleball requires focus, strategic thinking, and quick decision-making. Studies have shown that mentally stimulating activities can help to improve cognitive function and reduce the risk of dementia in older adults.
- **Pickleball is relatively easy to learn.** The rules are fairly simple – points can only be earned by the side that is serving, and the winner is the first side to get to 11 points, win by 2 – and the game is played on a small court with a relatively slow-moving ball, making it a fun and engaging sport that can be picked up rather quickly by almost everyone, regardless of age, body type, or athletic ability. It is a sport that can be played competitively or recreationally, and it provides players with skills to improve upon the more they play.
- **It is a relatively inexpensive sport** that can be played standing or in wheelchairs, year-round, both indoors and outdoors. Paddles start at about \$10, balls are about \$3 each, and most outdoor courts are free. Many YMCAs and school gyms provide affordable indoor courts during the winter. In addition, the Silver Sneakers program, offered by many Medicare Advantage plans and

some Medigap plans, covers gym membership at many facilities that include pickleball. You can go to the USA Pickleball Association's website (<https://www.places2play.org/>) and enter your zip code to find places to play near you. And, if all else fails, you can always buy a do-it-yourself pickleball court kit from Amazon.com and convert a tennis court near you into a pickleball court quite easily! The USA Pickleball Association's website even includes "Do it Yourself" instructions for creating your own pickleball court almost anywhere. See <https://usapickleball.org/what-is-pickleball/court-diagram/do-it-yourself-guidelines/>

- **It is a game that can be played together by people of all ages.** Currently, the average pickleball player's age is 38, so it is a sport that can be enjoyed together by individuals of different generations. Even kids can play the sport!

So, the next time you are thinking you should exercise more but wishing you could find a fun activity to make the exercise not feel so grueling, consider trying pickleball. This author became hooked on the sport from the first time I played it in 2019! Below is a pickleball action shot. I am in the lower left-hand corner, getting ready to return the ball.



What's the "Scoop"?

By Ingrid Kundinger, SMP Program Director



We received an important update from CoventBridge Group, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Unified Program Integrity Contractor (UPIIC) that we wanted to share. But first,

let's unjumble the alphabet soup.

CMS is the federal agency that provides health coverage to more than 160 million people through Medicare, Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and the Health Insurance Marketplace. CMS works in partnership with the entire health care community to improve quality, equity, and outcomes in the health care system.

The role of the UPIIC is to detect fraud, waste, and abuse in Medicare Parts A, B, Durable Medical Equipment, Home Health, Hospice, and Medicaid. CoventBridge Group is the name of the organization that serves in this capacity for several states, including Wisconsin. When we submit cases of suspected fraud for possible investigation, CoventBridge Group is notified, as they are part of the fraud-fighting team for Medicare.

Here's what we learned and wanted to share:

- Many of the same beneficiaries who received unwanted COVID-19 test kits now have suspect claims for in-person COVID-19 tests, durable medical equipment, catheters, and glucose monitors.

- The bad actors are expanding to other services/supplies and/or brokering the Medicare information they have available to them.
- Medicare beneficiaries need to be very vigilant about checking their Medicare Summary Notices for fraudulent charges for other types of services/supplies.
- Evidence shows that the suspected scammers are making phone calls and getting people to say "yes" at any time during the call. Once the person responds "yes" to any of the questions asked, the phone call recording can be altered to make it sound like the product was wanted or requested.

What's the Scoop? It is critical that we just say "no" and hang up when we receive these types of calls. It is best to avoid saying "yes" to anything when on the phone with unknown callers. And better yet? If you don't recognize the phone number calling you, don't answer it!

Here's a Double Scoop: Please review your Medicare statements regularly to make sure all claims filed with your information are accurate. If something doesn't seem right, say something. If you see a suspicious claim, call our toll-free helpline at (888) 818-2611. We can help!

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What's the "Scoop"? continued from page 5

Remember that your Senior Medicare Patrol team is here to help in any way that we can. And information about how you can protect yourself from Medicare-related fraud and scams can always be found on our website.

Here's the Scoop on how you can reach us:

Call: (888) 818-2611

E-mail: smp-wi@gwaar.org

Website: www.smpwi.org

Facebook: @WisconsinSeniorMedicarePatrolw



FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION
PROTECTING AMERICA'S CONSUMERS

Scammers Hide Harmful Links in QR Codes to Steal Your Information

By Alvaro Puig, Consumer Education Specialist

December 6, 2023

QR codes seem to be everywhere. You may have scanned one to see the menu at a restaurant or pay for public parking.



And you may have used one on your phone to get into a concert or sporting event, or to board a flight. There are countless other ways to use them, which explains their popularity. Unfortunately, scammers hide harmful links in QR codes to steal personal information. Here's what to know.

There are reports of scammers covering up QR codes on parking meters with a QR code of their own. And some crafty scammers might send you a QR code by text message or email and make up a reason for you to scan it. These are some of the ways they try to con you:

- they lie and say they couldn't deliver your package and you need to contact them to reschedule

- they pretend like there's a problem with your account and you need to confirm your information
- they lie, saying they noticed suspicious activity on your account, and you need to change your password

These are all lies they tell you to create a sense of urgency. They want you to scan the QR code and open the URL without thinking about it.

A scammer's QR code could take you to a spoofed site that looks real but isn't. And if you log in to the spoofed site, the scammers could steal any information you enter. Or the QR code could install malware that steals your information before you realize it.

So how can you protect yourself?

- **If you see a QR code in an unexpected place, inspect the URL before you open it.** If it looks like a URL you recognize, make sure it's not spoofed – look for misspellings or a switched letter.

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You are **NOT** getting a new Medicare card

✘		NOT WITH A MICROCHIP
✘		NOT A PLASTIC ONE
✘		NOT BECAUSE OF COVID-19



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Senior Medicare Patrol
Preventing Medicare Fraud

(888) 818-2611
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Scammers Hide Harmful Links in QR Codes to Steal Your Information
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- **Don't scan a QR code in an email or text message you weren't expecting – especially if it urges you to act immediately.** If you think the message is legitimate, use a phone number or website you know is real to contact the company.
- **Protect your phone and accounts.** [Update your phone's OS](#) to protect against hackers and [protect your online accounts](#) with strong passwords and multi-factor authentication.

Book Recommendation– *GWAAR Staff Pick*

Nice To Meet You...Again: Empowering Children to Find Joy and Understanding in Loved Ones with Dementia Hardcover – March 23, 2018

by Suzanne Bottum-Jones (Author)

No! No!” shouted Ollie, “I don't want to go in there! That's not my grandpa; he doesn't even know who I am anymore.” So begins the beautiful journey of a little boy who transitions from being scared and frustrated that his grandpa, and best friend, does not know him anymore, to a boy who learns what HE can do to reconnect with his grandpa who is living with dementia. This unforgettable story takes readers through a range of emotions, from sadness to hope, as Ollie learns how to better understand the effects of dementia experienced by his grandpa and what he can do to help hold on to his relationship and enjoy their time together. **This story is a lesson for children and adults to learn to accept a loved one experiencing dementia and to celebrate the joy in the interactions they still experience together.**





Nurse Practitioner Convicted of \$200M Health Care Fraud Scheme

From Office of Public Affairs, U.S. Department of Justice, December 2023

A federal jury in Miami convicted a Florida nurse practitioner yesterday for her role in a scheme to defraud Medicare by submitting more than \$200 million in false and fraudulent claims for expensive genetic testing and medical equipment that the Medicare beneficiaries did not need.

According to court documents and evidence presented at trial, Elizabeth Hernandez, 45, of Homestead, signed thousands of orders for medically unnecessary orthotic braces and genetic tests, resulting in fraudulent Medicare billings in excess of \$200 million. As part of the scheme, telemarketing companies would contact Medicare beneficiaries to convince them to request orthotic braces and genetic tests, and then send pre-filled orders for these products to Hernandez, who signed them, attesting that she had examined or treated the patients. In reality, she had never spoken with many of the patients. In 2020, Hernandez ordered more cancer genetic tests for Medicare beneficiaries than any other provider in the nation, including oncologists and geneticists. She then billed Medicare as though she were conducting complex office visits with these patients, and routinely billed more than 24 hours of “office visits” in a single day. Hernandez personally pocketed approximately \$1.6 million in the scheme, which she used to purchase expensive cars, jewelry, home renovations, and travel.

The jury convicted Hernandez of one count of conspiracy to commit health care fraud and wire fraud, in addition to four counts of health care fraud and three counts of making false statements relating to health care matters. She is scheduled to be sentenced on Dec. 14. She faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison for conspiracy, 10 years in

prison on each health care fraud count, and five years in prison on each false statement count. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Nicole M. Argentieri of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division, Assistant Director Luis Quesada of the FBI’s Criminal Investigative Division, and Deputy Inspector General for Investigations Christian J. Schrank of the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General (HHS-OIG) made the announcement.

The FBI and HHS-OIG investigated this case.

Trial Attorney Andrea Savdie and Assistant Chief Kate Payerle and of the Criminal Division’s Fraud Section are prosecuting the case.

The Fraud Section leads the Criminal Division’s efforts to combat health care fraud through the Health Care Fraud Strike Force Program. Since March 2007, this program, comprised of 15 strike forces operating in 25 federal districts, has charged more than 5,000 defendants who collectively have billed federal health care programs and private insurers more than \$24 billion. In addition, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, working in conjunction with the Office of the Inspector General for the Department of Health and Human Services, are taking steps to hold providers accountable for their involvement in health care fraud schemes. More information can be found at www.justice.gov/criminal-fraud/health-care-fraud-unit



Do You Need a New or Replacement Social Security card? We're Making it Easier!

From the Social Security Administration

If you need a new or replacement Social Security card, we've got great news! You may be able to complete, or at least start, your application on our website – and, if necessary, use our online scheduling tool to book an appointment at a local office.

Start your application

Do you need to apply for a Social Security number (SSN) and card? You can visit ssa.gov/number-card to begin the process. You'll answer a series of questions to determine whether you can:

- Complete the application process online.
- Start the application process online, then bring any required documents to your local Social Security office to complete the application, typically in less time.
- Complete the application process at your local office.

If you can't complete the application online, you must visit a Social Security office. To learn more, please review our publication, Your Social Security Number and Card, at ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10002.pdf.

Replace Your Social Security Card

Want to replace your card? The **Card Replacement Screener** on our Replace Social Security card at

ssa.gov/number-card/replace-card helps you determine the best way to do so.

Depending on your situation, you may be able to request a replacement card without visiting a local office. Choose "**Answer a few questions**" on the **Replacement Card** at ssa.gov/number-card/replace-card to get started. Even if you can't complete the process online and must visit an office, you can still save yourself time by starting the application online.

Were You Asked to Come into an Office? Here's What You Should Know

If you start the application online and we determine you need to come into an office, you can use our new **Online Self-Scheduling option**:

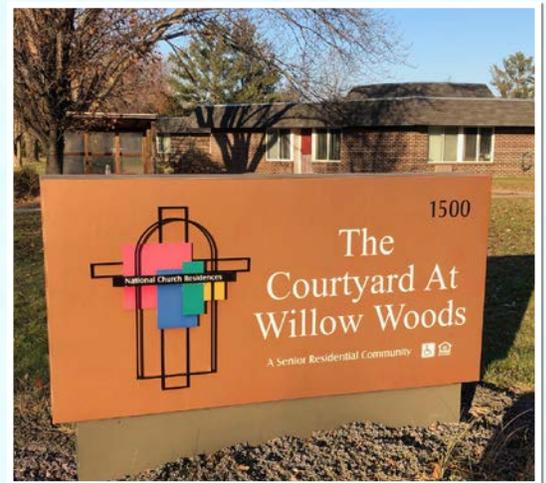
- Select your language preference.
- Select the most convenient office to receive service.
- Choose to receive communications and appointment reminders through email or text.
- Conveniently use your mobile device to check-in for your appointment.

You can also reschedule, modify, or cancel your appointment online without having to call or visit the office.

Outreach Activities



Staffing a booth and having some fun at the Livin' Well Fair in Prairie du Chien



SMP was in Tomah on a beautiful sunny day for a presentation



Be Careful if Offered a “Free Roof Inspection”

By Tiffany Schultz, BBB SW WI Regional Director



Spring is right around the corner, and so are the home improvement scams. Roofing scams in particular tend to pop up after big storms. Scammers call, or show up at your door, claiming to represent a roofing company that is working in your area.

The fake “roofer” offers a free inspection or an on-the-spot roof repair. They may claim their company is working on a neighbor’s home and is offering free inspections to the neighbors. Or, they just happened to be driving by and noticed your damaged roof. If you ask questions and the business is not legitimate, you’ll most likely be met with vague answers, or even hung up on.

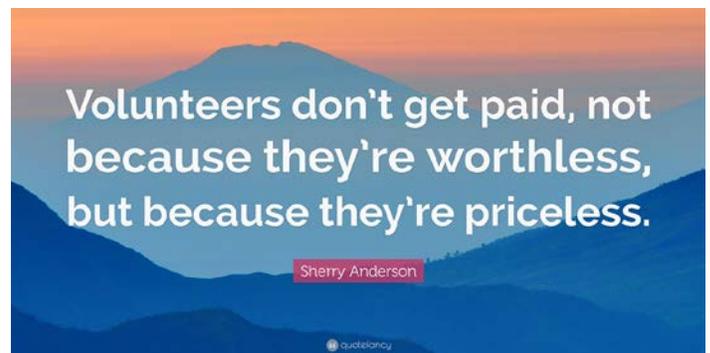
If you accept the free inspection, the “inspector” shows up at your house and climbs up on the roof. If they don’t find enough wear and tear to merit an entire roof, they may fabricate it by tearing off shingles to mimic wind damage. Or, they may show you photos of someone else’s damaged roof.

How to avoid roofing scams

- **Beware of unsolicited offers.** Many scams begin with a contractor who “just happens to be in the area” and notices your roof or home exterior appears to need repairs.
- **Get your insurance company to inspect your roof, and/or get a second opinion.** Filing a claim with your insurance company could affect future claims or your insurance coverage. Before signing any paperwork or contracts with a roofing company, call your insurance company and ask for an inspection to verify the need for repairs or replacement. Another option is to get opinions from other roofing companies. An honest company will tell you if your roof really needs replacement.
- **Research roofing companies before you hire.** Check out a business on BBB.org before doing business. Keep a close eye on reviews and complaints other consumers might have had. Doing your own research is one of the best ways to know if a roofing company is legitimate or just a cover for a scam.
- **Report it.** If you’ve experienced this scam or another scam, report it to BBB.org/ScamTracker. Your report helps to warn others of the scams taking place in the marketplace.

Thank You!

With National Volunteer Week starting April 14, SMP would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to our incredible team! Your enthusiasm and dedication have allowed this program to grow and flourish every year. We value the interest you’ve shown and the time you’ve spent in so many communities around the state. We are fortunate to have you and are most grateful for your support.





Introducing Norma, a New Member of Our Volunteer Team

By Molly A. Kelly, SMP Volunteer Coordinator

Where did you grow up Norma?

I was raised on a farm in the Midwest and moved to Wisconsin after college. I believe the farm is a great place to grow up. It teaches responsibility, hard work, care, flexibility, resilience, and teamwork; along with being able to be outdoors most of the time, in all kinds of weather.

Where's your favorite vacation location?

Anywhere up north in Wisconsin, but we particularly like the Minocqua area. The food is great, shopping is plentiful, and beautiful lakes and nature to enjoy.

Is there a recent book you've read that you liked?

I recently read *Saving My Assassin* by Virginia Prodan. It is a true story and memoir, a suspenseful thriller and testament to human courage.

How about a movie that you enjoyed?

A recent movie that had an impact was, *The Sound of Freedom*, which brought to light human trafficking issues around the world. Even though I am well-versed in this illegal activity, I don't think anyone could see this movie and not leave with a heaviness in their heart for these innocent victims of trafficking.

If you were to appear in a TV show, which one would it be?

If I was a cast member in a show, I think I would be a stand-in on *Golden Girls* as I have been told numerous times that I look like Blanche (Rue McClanahan).

Let's say next Saturday you're having a dinner party. Who would you invite?

If I had a dinner party and could invite anyone, whom would I choose? I would choose Mother Teresa. It would be an honor to have her as a guest and hear her stories and experience her kindness, patience, humility, contentment, and the immense love, care, and empathy that she poured out for everyone she met and those forgotten and neglected by society.

In another life, what would you imagine it to be?

I would own a restaurant called Dessert First. A menu favorite would be a flight of desserts... bite-sized samples of delectable desserts.

Any closing comments you would like to share?

My husband and I believe that volunteerism is one of the ways the world goes round. We have been active in volunteering for many years. I held many different positions in the medical field over the years and believe this vast knowledge and experience in the medical field will help contribute to this volunteer position as well. I love to educate others and encourage them to be proactive versus reactive ... it's so much easier!

Welcome to SMP Norma! We are fortunate and thrilled to have you on the team!





Wisconsin SMP Partnership With Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council

Working to enhance the quality of life for all Native people

Celebrating a Six-Year Partnership

By Kassy Heard, SMP Representative With Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council

As we move into spring, Senior Medicare Patrol and GLITC will be celebrating our sixth-year partnership. During this period, we have provided valuable education and information about fraud and scams to elders, caregivers, and family members throughout the Tribal communities in Wisconsin. I am grateful that the partnership has no doubt informed many Anishinaabe people about ways they can protect themselves from potential harm.

Anishinaabe often refers to the indigenous people of the Great Lakes region. In Wisconsin there are 11 Tribal Band and Nations, six of which are Ojibwe. The six bands of Lake Superior Chippewa (Ojibwe) are: Bad River, Lac Courte Oreilles, Lac du Flambeau, Red Cliff, St. Croix Tribal Community, and Sokaogon Chippewa. The other Tribal Nations are: Forest County Potawatomi, Ho Chunk Nation, Menominee Nation, Oneida Nation, and Stockbridge-Munsee.



Each tribal community is diverse and unique in their customs and traditions. Being invited to the events and outreach opportunities is an honor. This year, like others in the past, we will continue to provide this valuable education. We have been able to enjoy small gatherings such as those at the Elder

Nutrition Meal programs, Elder Medicare Outreach events, and large events like the Great Lakes Native American Elder Association meetings. We welcome all opportunities to be a part of the events.

We would like to work towards recruiting community volunteers as well. It would be so wonderful to have Tribal Elders assisting in this important work. If you are interested, or know someone else who is, please reach out to Molly Kelly molly.kelly@gwaar.org.

If you have any questions about the Senior Medicare Patrol in the Tribal communities, please contact me at (715) 588-1016 or kheard@glitc.org.



Hearing Loss and Mental Health

By the GWAAR Legal Services Team



“Hearing loss sneaks up on you. You don't realize what you're missing until you get a hearing aid. Admittedly, it takes a while to adjust to using it, and it isn't perfect at picking up conversation in noisy places. However, it's the difference between engaged fully with others and being only partly present. Ultimately, it makes a big difference in how I participate in the world.”

~ Bruce – a hearing aid user

Nearly two-thirds of adults over age 50 report hearing difficulties but less than 15% have tried hearing aids, despite reporting that hearing loss has had a range of negative impacts on their lives. The most commonly reported problems included negative impacts on the ability to enjoy entertainment and to participate meaningfully in social activities and personal relationships. Nearly a third of people surveyed said that hearing loss had a negative impact on their mental health.

Overall, people tend to be less concerned about hearing loss than other conditions of aging such as vision problems, serious illnesses, cognitive decline, and fall risks. Although studies show that hearing loss negatively affects other areas of life, people wait an average of seven years to purchase a hearing aid after first experiencing hearing difficulties.

For some people experiencing hearing loss, over-the-counter products may offer a more affordable approach to hearing aids. OTC hearing aids are available without a prescription, though more than half of consumers are unaware or uncertain as to whether a prescription is required. While they tend to be considerably less expensive than prescription hearing aids, OTC hearing aids may not be the right solution for everyone. Anyone experiencing hearing difficulties should discuss the problem with their doctor and consider getting a formal hearing evaluation.



Five Myths About Aging

Myth 1

The older you get, the less sleep you need.

We might wish this were the case, but older adults still need 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night. Adequate sleep can help reduce your risk of falls, improve your overall mental well-being, and help reduce your risk for certain health conditions.



Myth 2

Depression is normal in older adults.

Although depression is a common mood disorder, it is not a normal part of aging. Talk with your doctor if you begin showing signs of depression, such as irritability or decreased energy.



Myth 3

Older adults can't learn new things.

Not true! Older adults can still learn new things, create new memories, and improve their performance on a variety of skills.



Myth 4

Memory problems always mean Alzheimer's disease.

Not all memory problems are a sign of Alzheimer's disease. Talk with your doctor to determine whether the memory changes you're noticing are normal or whether they may be a sign of something more serious.



Myth 5

Older adults do not need to exercise.

Older adults have a lot to gain by being active — and a lot to lose by sitting too much. Exercise and physical activity can help manage some chronic conditions, improve mental and physical health, and maintain independence as you age.



Visit www.nia.nih.gov/health/10-myths-about-aging for more information about aging and older adults.





Foods for Eye Health

Contributors: Esther Ellis, MS, RDN, LDN

Reviewers: Academy Nutrition Information Services Team

Do your eyes have all the nutrients they need to help prevent cataracts, macular degeneration, glaucoma, and other sight woes? Read on to learn about some of the top foods to promote eye health. But don't count on popping a pill to reduce your risk! Your best sources of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants are from whole foods, since it may be a combination of nutrients within the foods which provide these benefits.

Kale: See the Light

This leafy green is a source of lutein and zeaxanthin, which are related to vitamin A and beta-carotene, and may help protect eye tissues from sunlight damage and reduce the risk of eye changes related to aging. Other good sources of these nutrients include dark green leafy vegetables such as collard greens, turnip greens, and spinach, broccoli, kiwi, grapes, yellow squash, oranges, corn, and egg yolk. Your body needs fat to absorb lutein and zeaxanthin, so be sure to eat them with a bit of unsaturated fat such as a drizzle of olive oil or a few slices of avocado. Kale also contains vitamin C and beta-carotene, other eye-friendly nutrients.

Sweet Potatoes: The Color of Health

Beta-carotene gives these tubers their orange color. Your body converts beta-carotene to vitamin A, a nutrient that helps prevent night blindness and age related macular degeneration. Sweet potatoes not your favorite? For beta-carotene, try other deep orange foods, such as carrots and butternut squash, plus dark green foods including spinach and collard greens. Liver, milk, and eggs are also sources of vitamin A.

And, similar to lutein and zeaxanthin, beta-carotene and vitamin A are absorbed best when eaten with a little healthy fat such as olive oil.

Strawberries: Help You "C" Better

Fresh, juicy strawberries are a good thing for your eyes, and contain plenty of vitamin C, which is an antioxidant that may help lower your risk of cataracts. Also, be sure to load up your plate with other vitamin C-rich foods including bell peppers, broccoli, citrus (such as orange and grapefruit), and cantaloupe.

Healthy Fats: Include Sources of Omega-3 Fatty Acids

Besides helping with the absorption of certain nutrients, some healthy fats also contain omega-3 fatty acids. Salmon is an excellent source of omega-3s, which may be beneficial for eye health. Include salmon or other types of fatty fish two to three times per week. Other foods that include omega-3 fatty acids are walnuts (which also contain eye-healthy vitamin E), flax and chia seeds.





Preventing Medicare Fraud

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Assisted living facility and nursing home residents are being targeted for hospice services even though they don't qualify because their life expectancy exceeds six months.

Medicare will not cover or approve curative care like cancer treatment or lifesaving surgery for those on hospice.



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