Medicare Advantage Plan Challenges – Media Spotlight

Medicare Advantage (MA) Plan enrollment has surged in recent years, accompanied by several challenges, including denials in coverage to medically necessary care and deceptive enrollment marketing strategies.¹ Media outlets have shed light on arising operational issues and associated impacts on vulnerable senior populations.¹ Media reports indicate that misleading marketing practices for commercial insurance are most prevalent with MA plans.¹ As a result, senior beneficiaries continue to enroll in MA plans and providers must address the shift to private plan enrollment as growth continues.²

Recent media outlet coverage indicates:

- Medicare Advantage predatory marketing strategies are on the rise across all forms of communication, targeting and persuading senior beneficiaries to enroll in plans with limited coverage.³
- MA Plan marketing schemes and related enrollment growth raises concerns as beneficiaries experience coverage issues due to fraudulent advertising and deceiving marketing tactics.³
- Private insurance plans use the trusted Medicare title to target beneficiaries into enrollment, profiting from denying coverage in necessary care.⁴
- There is a high need for increased enforcement against deceptive advertising practices in addition to increased monitoring of Medicare Advantage plans.⁵

The open enrollment period for Medicare leaves senior beneficiaries overwhelmed due to aggressive Medicare Advantage marketing strategies.⁵ Beneficiaries lack protection from third-party marketers, highlighting the need for unbiased sources for enrollment information.¹ Medicare Advantage plans continue to avoid plan regulations, leading to significant overcharges and increased stress for both providers and beneficiaries.⁶ The wide array of Medicare Advantage obstacles has led to widespread scrutiny, with a focus on protecting beneficiaries from misleading marketing schemes and ensuring seniors are able to receive accurate information about their health care plan options.⁵

What the Media is Saying

Reuters on misleading marketing practices utilized to sell Medicare Advantage plans:
“CMS, which runs Medicare, received 39,617 complaints about the marketing of Medicare Advantage and Part D drug plans in 2021 – a dramatic increase of 155% compared to 2020.”

Kaiser Health News on Medicare Advantage plans bypassing regulations:
“Auditors uncovered millions of dollars in improper payments – citing overcharges of more than $1,000 per patient a year on average,” indicating a need for increased plan oversight to curb fraud.

McKnight’s LTC News on CMS targeting Medicare Advantage scam advertising:
“A proposed rule would ban ads that have confusing words, imagery or logos, or that don’t specifically mention a health plan by name,” protecting beneficiaries from inaccurate health coverage information.
Increased CMS regulation is needed to ensure stronger protection measures for senior beneficiaries as they navigate the health plan marketplace.⁵

1 Miller M. Column: Warnings of Medicare Fraud Mount; Here is how to avoid it. Reuters. Published November 2022.
2 Medicare Advantage Enrollment Continues to Surge in an Increasingly Complex and Competitive Landscape | The Chartis Group. Published February 2022.
4 Wilkins B. As Scandals Mount, So Do Calls to Abolish Private Medicare Advantage Plans. Common Dreams. Published December 2022.
5 Khanna R & Pocan M. It’s Time to End the Medicare Advantage Scam. The Nation. Published December 2022.
7 Gaivin K. Feds target Medicare Advantage Scam Advertising. Published December 2022.