

DME and Telemedicine Fraud Schemes

Scammers continue to target seniors in complex telemedicine and durable medical equipment (DME) fraud schemes. As a result, beneficiaries may end up with back braces, pain creams and other devices and medications that may make their conditions worse.

While these scams are not new, the pandemic and the increased use of telemedicine have widened the victim pool. Medical providers often enter into arrangements with alleged telemedicine companies but are misled into this business model, and are swayed into writing prescriptions which the telemarketers sell and disseminate to DME suppliers and pharmacies.

It usually begins with a phone call. A telemarketing company will ‘cold call’ individuals, often seniors. The scammers are savvy. The caller usually has some personal information about the victim, thanks to the internet or by looking through records made available on the dark web through data breaches. They may have the victim’s Medicare ID or some other identifying information that makes the call sound legitimate.

Scammers often target individuals who have issues with pain, had a recent surgery or fall, and call them and tell them that they qualify for a free product. The victim may or may not talk to a physician on the call, and it certainly would not be the victim’s own care provider. It would be someone who the caller adds to the conversation, stating a physician is on the line and will write a prescription for the service. These callers are very talented and often the victim’s think the call is actually coming from their own doctor’s office.

These scammers are preying on seniors for monetary gain only, often times jeopardizing patient safety in the process. To put a stop to this kind of fraud, providers, payers and Medicare beneficiaries must all play a role in educating themselves, their patient’s and clients on fraud prevention. The more providers, payers and patients learn about the schemes, the less lucrative it will become for the fraudsters.

FALL ANNUAL OPEN ENROLLMENT: October 15-December 7, 2022

- It’s time to compare plans to make sure you have the right health and prescription drug plan for you for 2023. Contact ND SMP or ND SHIC at 800-575-6111 for assistance.

Reporting Medicare fraud: If you think you have spotted fraud, report it right away. ND SMP will help seniors prevent, detect and report Medicare fraud. If you see anything suspicious, contact the ND SMP at ndsmp@minotstateu.edu or call 1-833-818-0029 or 701-858-3580. For non-Medicare fraud issues, contact the ND Attorney General’s Office at 1-800-472-2600.

The information provided is intended to be a general summary only. Source of information: Health ITSecurity (14 Sept. 22). Xtelligent HEALTHCARE MEDIA. How BCBS MA combats DME, telemedicine fraud schemes.

North Dakota Senior Medicare Patrol Phone: 833-818-0029 or (701) 858-3580

For more information or to locate your SMP, visit <https://ndcpd.org/smp/>

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