



Preventing Medicare Fraud

## ND SMP Scam of the Month – April 2023

### Free Genetic Test Scam

Genetic testing company representatives are offering “free” genetic tests to Medicare beneficiaries. These tests are also referred to as DNA screenings, cancer screenings, and hereditary testing, to name just a few. Representatives are calling beneficiaries in North Dakota convincing them to take a cheek swab test. The “genetic testing” kit is mailed to the beneficiary along with instructions on how to swab, and directions on how to return the kit. The representatives promise the results will help beneficiaries avoid diseases or find the right medications. **All they ask for in return for this “free test kit” is the person’s Medicare number.**

While this may sound harmless it is dangerous. These companies can steal people’s medical identities and falsely bill Medicare, draining the system of needed funds. Tests ordered under these circumstances are unnecessary and could lead to confusion about someone’s health condition.

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) advises the public to be suspicious of anyone who offers free genetic testing and then requests their Medicare number. The OIG also states a physician who the person knows, and trusts should always order any genetic testing. In fact, federal regulations state that diagnostic tests must be ordered by the physician who is treating the beneficiary – in other words, the person’s own doctor. A doctor who has never met or examined a patient, often hired by a genetic testing company, should not be signing off on any tests. That is a red flag that this could be fraud.

The SMP recommends that beneficiaries:

- Do not give out your personal information to anyone who calls offering free genetic testing.
- Only agree to do a genetic test for a doctor that you know and trust, not a doctor on the phone you have never met from a company you do not know.
- Always read your Medicare Summary Notice (MSN) and report charges for questionable genetic services.
- Refuse to accept a testing kit delivery in the mail. Try to send it back to the person who sent it.
- Be suspicious of anyone who offers free genetic testing and then requests your Medicare number. If your personal information is compromised, it may be used in other fraud schemes.
- Remember, if these tests sound too good to be true, that is because they often are!

**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](mailto:ndsmp@minotstateu.edu) or call 1-833-818-0029. 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: SMP Resource Center.

**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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