

Letter to the Editor

Dear Loring Hospital patients, families and communities:

The Senior Medicare Patrol of Iowa (SMP) is seeing several scams related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) as the public health emergency continues. Scammers are targeting older adults and those with serious long-term health conditions who appear to have a higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19. Fraudsters are attempting to bill Medicare for fake or sham tests and "treatments" related to the coronavirus and are targeting individuals to illegally obtain money or Medicare numbers. The following includes information about three types of recent scams.

**Social Security Benefits Suspension Scam**

The Social Security Office of the Inspector General has received reports that Social Security beneficiaries have received letters through the U.S. Mail stating their payments will be suspended or discontinued unless they call a phone number referenced in the letter. Scammers may then mislead beneficiaries into providing personal information or payment via retail gift cards, wire transfers, internet currency, or by mailing cash, to maintain regular benefit payments during this period of COVID-19 office closures. Social Security will not suspend or decrease Social Security benefit payments or Supplemental Security Income payments due to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Any communication people receive that says SSA will reduce payments or benefits is a scam, whether you receive it by letter, text, email, or phone call.

**Total Care Meal Scam**

We have received word that some Iowa Total Care members may be receiving a text message asking them to click on a link to sign up for meals – this is a SCAM. Please alert them not to click on the link. Here is what the message says: "Iowa Total Care is going to be providing two meals per household member who is insured by Iowa Total Care. Clients should ignore this text, there are no free meals.

**CMS Providing Test Kits Scare:**

Several Medicare beneficiaries in Benton County have received calls from a person stating they are with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). The callers report that because of the person's history with medication they are eligible for Coronavirus testing and they want to come to their home to drop off the test kit. Beware, these calls are a scam. CMS is not calling people to offer to come to their house to provide a test kit.

If you think you are a victim of one of these scams, the Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) counselors at Loring Hospital are happy to answer any questions you have about the scam or the Medicare program in general. Please call one of us, your SHIIP Counselors at Loring Hospital, at 712-662-7105.

Sincerely,  
Lori Mentzer and LeAnn Olhausen  
Loring Hospital SHIIP Counselor