

Preventing Medicare Enrollment Problems is Good for Your Health

As a nurse care coordinator at a primary care practice, I witness firsthand how confusing and intimidating Medicare may be for our patients. Understanding Medicare can be challenging (even for me!). Navigating the language alone can be dizzying- Parts A, B, C, D, advantage plans, supplemental plans, Part D drug plans, gap insurance, premiums, deductibles... it can seem overwhelming.

Patients' misunderstandings about their Medicare coverage can even affect patient health. I have observed patients so concerned about their out-of-pocket costs or unsure of their coverage, that they actually avoid necessary visits to their provider. This kind of fear and confusion undermines the very purpose of Medicare: to improve the health and longevity of older Americans.

How can our patients who are turning 65 successfully enroll in the right plan, at the right time--a plan which provides quality medical care that is affordable?

Just as staying healthy is largely about prevention, I strongly recommend that folks learn about their Medicare options *before* enrolling when turning 65. One way to learn about Medicare is online at www.medicare.gov. Fortunately, local help is also available in person at Central Vermont Council on Aging's free workshops called, "Medicare and You".

Central Vermont Council on Aging (CVCOA) has served as the primary experts on aging services in Lamoille County for more than 40 years. At the "Medicare and You" workshop, staff from CVCOA will walk you through everything you need to know about Medicare enrollment, including the different plans, gap and advantage coverage, prescription drug coverage, and whether you qualify for benefits to help you with your costs.

Starting in July, this workshop will be offered in different locations and dates near you, including Cambridge, Johnson, Morrisville, Stowe, and Waterbury. The first of the workshops will be held on July 17 at our office here at Family Practice Associates at the Cambridge Health Center. Here is the complete schedule:

July 17	Cambridge Regional Health Center, 272 N. Main Street, Cambridge, 5:30-7:00pm
August 7	Johnson Town Hall, Vermont Route 15, Johnson, 5:30-7:00pm
September 18	Stowe Library, 90 Pond Street, Stowe, 5:30-7:00pm
October 2	Green Mountain Support Services, 93 James Road, Morrisville, 5:30-7:00pm
November 13	Waterbury Public Library, 28 N. Main Street, Waterbury, 5:30-7:00pm

Central Vermont Council on Aging's free "Medicare and You" workshop is available to anyone turning 65 as well as disabled adults under 60. Caregivers are welcome. All participants will receive a free copy of the "Medicare and You" handbook. To register, or for more information call 802/479-0531 or email medicareworkshops@cvcoa.org. Together, let's prevent Medicare misunderstandings and improve patient healthcare choices!

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Rorie Dunphey works under Vermont's Blueprint for Health as the RN Chronic Care Coordinator at Family Practice Associates in Cambridge. She works one-on-one with people and leads groups to promote health, help people to better manage their chronic diseases and assists patients in accessing community or state resources. Rorie has a particular passion for promoting a healthy diet and exercise lifestyle to inspire people to live their best life.