List of doctors willing to accept Medicare released

A catalog is now available listing doctors who charge less than that fall within the range of most Medicare reimbursement tables. About 3,000 doctors are listed who made 1982 to the federal Medicare program, as well as the percentage of times they have agreed to treat patients at rates that Medicare will reimburse.

According to Peter Burns, Assistant Attorney General with the Consumer Protection Division, the Medicare system typically operates as follows:

If the consumer goes to a physician for $35 worth of services, and Medicare says that a reasonable charge for the services is only $100, Medicare will pay only 80 percent of the $100 charge. The consumer would have to pay the $35 difference out of his own pocket.

"If a doctor accepts assignment (changes set by the government as reasonable for a given service), he will charge only $100," says Burns.

Before the publication of the catalog, senior citizens and the handicapped had to either "shop" for doctors who would accept assignment, or pay the difference between the Medicare fee and the actual physician's fee themselves. About 60 percent of Maryland's doctors accept assignment, according to a Blue Cross-Blue Shield spokesman.

Medicare patients can obtain information about physicians who accept assignment by calling the Office of Aging's Consumer Care Centers at 383-6385 or the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division Branch Offices at 576-6550.

Also available is a brochure, The Consumer Guide to Medicare Assignment and Cutting Health Care Costs which describes the significance of Medicare assignments and practical shopping tips for consumers in search of health care services.

The list of doctors also designates the physicians' specialties and the percentage of claims for which they accept medical assignment.

"If a consumer called about a doctor we can tell them if the physician is on the list and the rate. If the consumer calls looking for a specialty, we can give them the names of doctors and the percentage of cases accepted on assignment," says Burns.

The information concerning so-called "assignment" physicians has always been maintained by Maryland Blue Cross and Blue Shield kept on computer records but deemed too expensive to remove and distribute.

"Quite a few complaints were received from private organizations, individuals and consumers and in the early Fall they reversed their position," Burns explained.

"The high cost of health care presents perhaps the most serious problem facing seniors today," according to Rosalie Abrams, Director of the State Office on Aging.

"Many seniors have been forced to deplete their savings, or to forego basic necessities, in order to obtain health care. We hope the information we're releasing will help seniors avoid those tough choices."

Baltimore County NAACP heightens political activism

By Tyrone Viness
AFRO Staff Writer

In response to the need for more political activism in Baltimore County, the NAACP (Baltimore County branch) has developed a new push in that direction with Operation "PART".

Operation "PART", (Political Action Registration Team), is the acronym used to identify the voter registration phase of the branch's total political effort for 1984 in the areas of voter registration, voter education and voter participation.

The "PART" includes four types of participants working with NAACP's political action committee, chaired by Mary Alexander. The focus of the program is to provide each citizen in Baltimore County a convenient way to register to vote during 1984.

Participants will include Sojourner Douglass College students; Baltimore County elected officials; Baltimore County school officials and students, as well as Baltimore County citizens within each legislative district.

Baltimore County Branch President, Col. James R. Pennington, said about the new program, "It is time to push away from the breakfast tables and begin to operate in the fields to gain parity at the ballot box and registering more voters in our Baltimore County communities. A way to accomplish this is thru the branch's new Operation "PART"."

Field tests of this project by SDC students has indicated an increase of Baltimore City citizens who have moved to Baltimore County and are not registered to vote in the county. As a result the study found that many new county residents often return to their old voting districts to vote.

Additionally the Board of Supervisors of Elections of Baltimore County recently announced that 17,000 Baltimore County voters have been notified that they have been cancelled from voter registration list for not having voted in the last five consecutive years.

"When these type events occur our democratic process is in danger of debilitating to the point of extinction. Our continuing nonpartisan goals and efforts are pointed toward changing this situation by providing each person of voting age in Baltimore County an opportunity to vote," Pennington said.

"PART will encourage each voter to participate in political education activities, mobilizing all voters to go to the election polls and vote intelligently for people and issues affecting them during the next four years," he added.

To initiate Operation PART, the public administration class of Sojourner Douglass College has joined with the NAACP to begin a countywide voter registration drive on Sunday, Jan. 15, 1984, from 7 until 5 p.m. in East Baltimore County, At Maple Crest, Mars Estate and Tidewater Village.

Instructions on what each registrar must do will be provided by Lillian Eastmon, NAACP vice president; Mary Alexander, Political Action Committee chairman, and Barbara Ward.

Operation PART will be continued during February by Baltimore County students, followed by participation of Baltimore County citizens within each legislative district during March thru May.

This announcement is to reinforce that Baltimore City does not discriminate on the basis of handicapped status in admission or access to, or treatment or employment in, its programs and activities. The Mayor's Office of Human Development has been designated as the office responsible for coordinating this compliance. For further information, contact:

Ms. Daphne J. Neal
Handicapped Services Coordinator
City Hall 250
100 North Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202
(301) 396-4887 (VOICE AND TTY)

William Donald Schaefer, Mayor

Community Calendar

EAST BALTIMORE MEDICAL PLAN, PRESENTS AWARDS TO CHILDREN

On Friday, Jan. 13 at 10 a.m., the East Baltimore Medical Plan will host a program led by City Councilpersons Jackie McLean and Nathaniel McFadden to commemorate the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Awards will be presented to East Baltimore schoolchildren who were chosen as winners in a community contest.

The sixth graders in Schools No. 13, 26, 36, and 202 were asked to write an essay or draw a picture reflecting Dr. King's dream. Entries will be judged by a team of professionals from the Baltimore City school system and will be displayed on the walls in the main lobby of the Medical Plan.

Winners will be given certificates, gifts, and savings bonds, and corresponding donations will be made to the winners' schools.

The public is invited to attend. For more information, call 327-6065.

SPRING DANCE FUND RAISER

The Baltimore Unemployed Health Clinic, which provides free medical care to those unemployed is sponsoring a Spring Dance Fund Raiser. Provided will be free music, beer, set-ups and chicken, courtesy of Church's Fried Chicken. This Spring Dance Fund Raiser will take place on Feb. 19, from 4 p.m. until 6 p.m. at the Steelworkers Hall, 540 Dundalk Ave., tickets are $8. For more information call 426-3600 or 332-7488. This event is co-sponsored by Black United Fund.

HORNBECK NOTES

Better state math scores this year

A marked statewide improvement in the functional math test has led a top education official to predict math results will soon rival those on reading tests.

The proportion of 9th-graders who passed the new statewide functional math test jumped from about 40 to 60 percent since last year, officials said Monday.

State Schools Superintendent David Hornbeck said he is confident that the percentage passing the exam may soon reach 80 percent of the state's 55,000 9th-graders — the number who passed the reading skills test in the fall.

"Within two or three years, I fully expect 80 percent plus of 9th-graders to pass (the math test)," Hornbeck said. "It places us in the position to look to even stronger graduation requirements."

He said he would make a formal proposal to the state Board of Education for tougher graduation requirements sometime in March.

The math examinations given last fall were the first whose passage will be required for graduation.

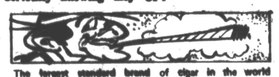
The 21,550 9th-graders who failed the test will have three more years to pass it and still receive their diplomas on time.

The math examinations given in 1982, which were only pilot tests and did not apply toward graduation, took many Maryland parents and teachers by surprise when only 20.6 percent passed.

Hornbeck said the improvement of that proportion to 60.0 percent showed that schools have "greatly improved" their mathematics curricula, and that students appear to be taking the tests more seriously knowing they are required for graduation.

Figures for each of the state's 24 subdivisions were unavailable, but Hornbeck said he believed that improvements were posted in every area.

The statewide functional tests are part of project basic, a program launched by Hornbeck in 1977 to improve basic skills among Maryland's high school students. UPI



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State does not need a top security youth prison

A special legislative committee says Maryland does not need a maximum security prison for juvenile criminals at least not now.

The committee, chaired by Sen. Thomas V. Mike Miller, D-Prince George's, voted 4-3 Tuesday against sending a recommendation to the General Assembly that such a need exists.

"I've got that feeling in my gut that there are those little sons-of-bitches out there who need to be locked up. But I don't have the statistics. I can't prove the need for such a facility," Miller said.

Instead, the committee endorsed a new two year experimental program of treating some of the most violent juvenile criminals at the Patuxent Institution. The program could be implemented administratively with or without the committee's recommendation.

One committee member, Sen. Charles Smelser, D-Carroll, was absent. "We've been sidetracked," complained Del. Philip Jimeno, D-Anne Arundel, the committee's most vocal supporter for constructing a prison for juveniles. "We've totally missed the mission and the task we set out to do."

The committee, composed of four senators and four delegates, was established to resolve a legislative dispute overlwhether such a facility is needed and, if so, how large it should be, whether it should be controlled by the Division of Corrections or the Juvenile Services Administration, where it should be built and how much it would cost.

After deciding the prison was not needed, the committee mad no attempt to address the other questions.

Several committee members said they had not had enough time nor heard enough testimony to determine whether a juvenile prison was needed and, therefore, had no choice but to votelagainst it.

At least two members, Miller and Sen. Thomas Bromwell were joined by Sen. Troy Brailey, D-Baltimore, and Del. Nancy Kopp, D-Montgomery, in voting that no need exists for a juvenile prison.

The proposed patuxent program would only involve those juvenile criminals who have been waived from the juridiction of the juvenile services administration into the adult prison system.

About 110 beds at Patuxent would be reserved for them, with about 40 to be filled by juveniles already serving time in adult prisons and the remaining 70 to be filled by through direct sentencing by judges.

"I think we haven't done a thing," said Del. Joseph Owens, D-Montgomery, who joined Jimeno and Del. Joseph Bartenfelder, D-Baltimor Baltimore County, in voting that a need exists for a perison for the state's most violent juveniles.

"What are we doing? All we're doing is approving something, really, that they could do now if they want to. I think we've been put on a detour," said Owens.

State job lists rarely used

A year-long study shows many state administrators are using loopholes to get around the proper procedures for promotions and transfers.

State prosecutors for the Attorney General's Office said Monday that top officials in state agencies rarely use eligibility lists when trying to fill job posts.

Under its so-called "rule of five," the Maryland Department of Personnel recommends that state jobs be filled from the top five candidates on an eligibility list.

But Dennis Sweeney, an Assistant Attorney General, estimated that currently only about 7 percent of the people promoted in state agencies are elevated through this rule.

Sweeney said that although administrators' efforts to get around the "rule of five" are not illegal, they "certainly didn't meet the spirit of the law."

Part of the problem, Sweeney said, stems from the fact that many state administrators have a "lack of confidence" in the promotional eligibility lists.

"Many, many administrators felt that you just couldn't get good qualified people off that list, so they resorted to other mechanisms," Sweeney said.

"We have recommended that the Department of Personnel take a long, hard look at this whole area."

About 17,000 promotions and transfers occur annually within Maryland's state goverament system.

The investigation into the state's promotional practices was begun last year after the state Special Prosecutor's Office received a tip alleging improprieties in promotions at the state Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. The case was later turned over to the Attorney General's office.

State Secretary of Personnel Theodore Thornton said his department has been reviewing promotional practices for the past four years, adding that the Attorney General's probe merely coincided with his own agency's investigative efforts.

Gun registering decline stumps state police

Maryland state police say they are stumped by a 28 percent drop in handgun registrations statewide in 1983 — the first decline in five years.

State Police Spokesman Dan McCarthy said handgun registrations dropped from a total of 34,385 in 1982 to 26,804 — a difference of 7,581.

"For past five years, there has been a continual increase and this is a reversal of the trend," McCarthy said.

"As for the reason, frankly I'm not sure," he said.

McCarthy said fewer handgun registrations possibly could be linked to a decline in overall crime — 10 percent in 1983.

"That could be perceived by citizens as less of a need to arm themselves," he said, noting that the largest crime decrease in 1983 came in the area of property crimes such as burglary.

Property crime fell 11 percent in 1983 from the previous year, while violent crime dropped 3 percent. UPI

sears

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