Feds Recovered $2.5 Billion From Medicare Fraud

BY ALICIA AULT

The federal government recovered $2.5 billion in fraudulent Medicare payments in 2009, gov-
ernment officials said at a briefing. The Affordable Care Act—one of the health-care reform measure's major provisions—require health-care providers to cooperate with federal and state governments to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse.

In all, 583 individuals were convicted of health-care fraud in 2009 by U.S. at-
torneys' offices and federal prosecutors. On the civil side, the Justice Department opened 886 new investigations and had 1,135 civil fraud matters pending.

Physicians were among those convict-
ed or fined for fraud and abuse schemes. A California physician paid $2.2 million to settle allegations that in 2002-2006, he allowed his universal provider identification number to be used to bill Medicare for respiratory therapy. A Kansas cardiologist paid $1.3 million to settle allegations that his group submit-
ted claims for services not provided.

Ms. Sebelius and Attorney General Eric Holder highlighted efforts by the Health Care Fraud Prevention and Enforcement Action Team (HEAT), which was begun in 2007 to address durable medical equipment fraud and abuse in south Florida. The strike force has since been expanded to focus on potential hot spots of potential fraud, identified by claims patterns. In 2009, Los Angeles, New York, and the Washington, D.C., area were added; now the strike force also operates in Brooklyn, N.Y., Baton Rouge, La., and Tampa, Fla.

Ms. Sebelius said that new types of scams are emerging, as criminals attempt to take advantage of se-
iors who may not understand the health reform laws. Scam artists have gone door-to-door in some states selling bogus “ObamaCare” policies, or asking Medicare benefici-
aries to identify information to issue “new Medicare cards,” she said.

Other scams are tied to the issuance of rebate checks to Medicare beneficiaries whose Medicare Part D drug expenditures 


UnitedHealth Settlement: Physicians Must File by October

BY MARY ELLEN SCHNEIDER

Check your mailbox. If you provid-
ed covered out-of-network services to patients insured by UnitedHealth Group between March 1994 and No-

In 2009, the federal government 


Ranks of Americans Lacking Insurance Grew in 2009

BY ALICIA AULT

The number of uninsured Americans rose last year, with 21% of all adults aged 18-64 years reporting that they were uninsured at the time that they were in-

Since 1999, increasing proportions of people have reported that they were uninsured at the time of the annual sur-

Hispanics were least likely to have in-

Not surprisingly, states with larger His-


More information on the NIH survey is available at www.cdc.gov/nchs.