

# Keeping You Informed

News You Can Use ... from Andrea Hoxie

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*Coming Next Year! . . . . .*

The broad market reforms outlined in the Affordable Care Act take effect on January 1, 2014. Individuals and families purchasing insurance in the individual market will be guaranteed coverage for pre-existing conditions, and their premiums cannot vary based on their gender or medical history. There will also be subsidies to help consumers afford the cost of coverage, and new state-based health insurance exchanges will help consumers find the policies that best meet their needs. (Texas will have no state-based health insurance exchange, so Texans will have to rely on the Federal exchange.) At the same time, other provisions take effect that will significantly increase the cost of coverage for millions of individuals, families, and small businesses.

Beginning in 2014, the health reform law imposes a new sales tax on health insurance that will increase the cost of health care coverage. The amount of the tax will be \$8 billion in 2014, increasing to \$14.3 billion in 2018, and increased based

on premium trend thereafter. The Joint Committee on Taxation estimates that the health insurance tax will exceed \$100 billion over the next ten years.

The Congressional Budget Office has said that this tax will be “largely passed through to consumers in the form of higher premiums.” A 2011 analysis by Oliver Wyman estimates that this tax “will increase premiums in the insured market on average by 1.9% to 2.3% in 2014,” and by 2023 “will increase premiums 2.8% to 3.7%.” Source: AHA/

*Why Your Network of Physicians Matters . . . . .*

Nationally, approximately 88% of all claims were paid on an in-network basis in 2011—12% of claims were paid out-of-network. For consumers who choose to seek care out-of-network, studies show that the charges billed by some out-of-network providers can exceed several hundred or several thousand percent of what Medicare would reimburse for the same service in the same area. Consumers incur very high expenses when

out-of-network physicians “balance bill.” As is oftentimes the case when out-of-network physicians charge the difference back to the consumer, the cost can be enormous and further limits consumers’ access to affordable care. This detracts from the ability of health plans to offer affordable access to out-of-network providers for those consumers who want the advantages of a network, but also wish to have a coverage option for out-of-network providers they may wish to use.

*Medicare Advantage Companies in Receivership . . . . .*

After Universal Health Care Insurance Company and Universal Health Care, Inc. were placed in receivership, many Medicare beneficiaries whose health care costs were administered by those companies received letters from CMS notifying them they were now in Original Medicare, and in enrolled in a prescription drug plan. While it was first reported that these companies’ plans in Texas were not impacted, this writer has received several calls within the last days of April saying they just received a letter indicating what drug plan to which they have been assigned, effective May 1, and they now have original Medicare.

Many low and moderate income beneficiaries rely on Medicare Advantage plans to keep control of their health care expenses. This is especially important when they have a chronic condition like diabetes or COPD, as there are plans designed for those conditions.

There is a limited time to act if you were enrolled in a Universal Health Care Medicare Advantage plan. Call today to see if you qualify for a Special Election Period.

*Are You Eligible for a Low Income Subsidy? . . . . .*

You may be eligible for a low income subsidy to help with prescription drugs. To qualify for the Extra Help, a person must be receiving Medicare, have limited resources and income, and reside in one of the 50 States or the District of Columbia. (ssa.gov). When you apply you also have the option of having your information sent to your State to see if you qualify for a Medicare Savings Program. This may include help with the cost of Medicare Part B premiums, which is now \$104.90 per month for most. So, even if you don’t take prescription drugs, are your prescription drug costs are minimal, this may still benefit you.

Many who are eligible are not even aware that they are, and so are paying more than they need pay for health care and prescription drugs. If you’d like to find out, call today for a confidential, no-obligation consultation.

*Finally . . . Dental!!! . . . . .*

For the first time ever, we are proud to offer dental insurance. Heretofore, our suggestion was to save the money you would pay for a dental premium and use it toward the costs of your dental work. Until now.



Now available: dental insurance that has no annual nor lifetime maximum, is available at rates that are competitive with dental insurance policies that only pay out \$1500 or \$2000 per year. Insure an individual for about a dollar a day, or a family (mom, dad and all the kids!) for less than three dollars a day.

*Life Happens . . . . .*

Unexpected turns. Unpredictable moments. Those are the things of life. Sometimes annoying, a minor inconvenience. Sometimes funny, an unexpected belly laugh. Sometimes tragic.

There are steps we take, without thinking, to avoid the unexpected, the unpredictable: we lock doors and cars, and even cabinets; we wear seatbelts; we inspect and do periodic maintenance on our cars; we insure our cars and homes. Sometimes, however, we put off, or just forget, to protect our families financially. That’s what life insurance is for; it’s for protecting the living.

If you’ve put off, or have forgotten to have that conversation, make a step toward taking care of that soon. Whenever your decide to talk, your call will be answered.

Will you be ready when . . .

# Life Happen<sup>2</sup> ?

*The Next-to-the-Last Question . . .*

If you could set up a retirement plan that will allow you to make contributions as little as \$50.00 per month AND enjoy market gains of the biggest 500 Companies in the United States (S&P 500), and NEVER have to worry about market crashes and losing your money, AND enjoy tax free growth, AND at retirement age make TAX FREE withdrawals, would you?

*The Last Question . . . . .*

Would you me to show you how?