



Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**June 20, 2011**

***Washington, DC – Earlier today, n4a CEO Sandy Markwood Joined HHS Secretary Sebelius, CMS Administrator Berwick and Assistant Secretary Greenlee at a Press Conference to Highlight Need for Greater Awareness of Preventive Health Benefits***

During the press conference, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released a new report showing that more than 5 million Americans with traditional Medicare – or nearly one in six people with Medicare—took advantage of one or more of the recommended preventive benefits now available for free thanks to the Affordable Care Act.

At the event, Medicare launched a nationwide public outreach campaign, called *Share the News, Share the Health*, including a letter to doctors and a new Public Service Announcement, that will raise awareness about all of the important preventive benefits now covered at no charge to patients, including the new Annual Wellness Visit benefit created by the Affordable Care Act. (Go to: [www.medicare.gov/share-the-health/](http://www.medicare.gov/share-the-health/))

According to the report, over 5.5 million beneficiaries in traditional Medicare used one or more of the preventive benefits now covered without cost-sharing including, most prominently, mammograms, bone density screenings, and screenings for prostate cancer. In 2011, Medicare began covering an Annual Wellness Visit at no cost to Medicare beneficiaries.

Medicare's *Share the News, Share the Health* campaign will run throughout the summer, with online ads and community events all over the country starting in July. HHS is releasing a nationwide public service announcement that is available on [www.youtube.com/CMSHHSgov](http://www.youtube.com/CMSHHSgov). As part of these outreach efforts, CMS has issued a "Dear Doctor" letter to providers today, calling on them to discuss preventive care with their patients.

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**At the press conference, Sandy made the following remarks:**

Good morning, it is a privilege to be here this morning with Secretary Sebelius, CMS Administrator Berwick, and Assistant Secretary for Aging Greenlee, to echo their commitment to get the word out about the critical preventive Medicare health benefits that are available to older Americans.

The new prevention benefits included under the Affordable Care Act—the no cost annual wellness visits and preventive health screenings—will help Medicare beneficiaries remain healthier longer, prevent chronic illnesses and, ultimately, save lives. In addition to these positive health outcomes, the expanded benefits will also help lower health care costs for beneficiaries.

As today's report shows, while thousands of Medicare beneficiaries have taken advantage of these benefits, there is still a lot of work yet to be done. That is why I am pleased to stand here today in support of HHS's national outreach effort to increase awareness about these benefits among America's seniors. We must focus on getting the word out to all Medicare beneficiaries, especially those who have traditionally been the most difficult to reach, including older adults with significant health disparities due to social, economic, environmental and geographic disadvantages.

The nation's Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and Native American aging programs, which exist in every community in the United States, are well-positioned to assist in this outreach effort. As Assistant Secretary Greenlee noted, we are the "boots on the ground" working with millions of seniors and their caregivers everyday delivering home-delivered meals, driving older adults to medical appointments, conducting health promotion and nutrition classes at local senior centers, as well as providing counseling on Medicare and other benefits. Working through our programs and our vast provider networks, we stand ready to work with HHS as it rolls out this important campaign.

Taking care of your health is important no matter what your age. The benefits of health promotion and disease prevention have no age boundaries. The Aging Network is proud to work with HHS to ensure that every older American is aware of these critical prevention benefits that will improve their health—and in so doing improve their lives.

Thank you.

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