



FRIDAY ALERT

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Medicare Beneficiaries Spend More Than \$5,000 for Health Care on Average

[According to the Kaiser Family Foundation](#), Medicare beneficiaries spent an average of \$5,460 on out-of-pocket health care costs in just one year.

The highest costs were related to long-term care and dental care, which are not covered by Medicare. Prescription drugs accounted for almost a quarter of out-of-pocket expenditures.

Medicare beneficiaries without supplemental insurance paid an average of \$7,473 in 2016, and those with multiple chronic health conditions spent an average of \$7,613.

“Millions of Americans rely on Medicare to cover health services like hospitalizations and physician visits. But seniors are struggling to pay for things that aren’t covered and the costs continue to rise,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Congress must take action to lower drug prices and expand Medicare to provide coverage for the services retirees need to stay healthy.”

Taxpayers Spent \$700,000 to Boost the Image of the Head of Medicare and Medicaid



[New reporting](#) shows that outside consultants hired by **Seema Verma**, administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid, were paid hundreds of thousands of dollars to bolster her image when the work could have been done by government communications employees at a fraction of the cost.

More than 40 public relations consultants, including at least eight former White House, presidential transition and campaign officials for President **Donald Trump**, were billing the government at a rate of \$380 an

hour.

Verma ended the contract in April [after POLITICO exposed](#) her widespread use of outside PR consultants, but the public is just now learning how much was spent.

Government employees also worked to improve Verma's public image. They [helped](#) plan a publicity campaign even though federal employees are barred from spending taxpayer money for publicity purposes. The plan included working to get magazines like *Glamour* to write about the Administrator and solicit speaking invitations at prestigious events.

"The Alliance called on Verma to resign when news about her flagrant misuse of taxpayer dollars first came to light in April, and we stand by that position now. Government officials have no business using federal funds to polish their image, particularly in an administration that is fixated on cutting health care to 'reduce the deficit'," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance.

Medicare Part D Enrollment Goes thru December 7

With Medicare's open enrollment period ending next week, it's the right time to do a "Medicare Check-up." Make sure that you are in the right Medicare insurance plan for your situation. Visit [eHealth](#) for unbiased resources that help Alliance members with their Medicare needs. This is a free service and there is no obligation to change your plan or enroll.

Learn about the coverage options available to you, and compare existing plans to see what fits your needs best. To speak to a licensed insurance agent at eHealth, an insurance broker specializing in the Medicare insurance plan needs of seniors, call 1-888-519-2029 (TTY users: 771) Monday - Friday between 8am - 8pm EST or visit [their website](#).

Medicare open enrollment runs from October 15 to December 7. For more information, please visit [Medicare.gov](#).

13 Percent of Americans Know Someone Who Died Because of Medical Costs

The respected Gallup polling organization says that [thirteen percent of Americans](#) say they know at least one friend or family member who died within the past five years because they couldn't afford necessary medical treatment.

Dovetailing with these results is a rising percentage of adults who report not having had enough money in the past 12 months to "pay for needed medicine or drugs that a doctor prescribed" to them. This percentage has increased significantly, from [18.9% in January 2019](#) to 22.9% in September.

"In our country, no one should die or go without needed medication because they can't afford it," said **Joseph Peters Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "Congress must take action to protect our seniors and combat skyrocketing drug prices before it's too late."