

Health Navigaid, LLC
Sanitized client correspondence regarding Medicare Advantage
2022

Hi _____,

It's funny.

When we need assistance in personal financial matters, we seek without hesitation guidance from an experienced financial planner or tax preparer. Similarly, when we want to create a will for the first time or consider making changes to an existing will, we will seek counsel from an attorney who is experienced in estate and trusts.

But in health insurance matters, everyone is an expert. It could be Uncle Charlie, Aunt Tillie, a neighbor, or the mailman – everyone has a story to tell and wisdom to impart. Unfortunately, no non-professional understands the ins and outs of Medicare Advantage (Part C) plans or the potentially irreversible consequences of enrolling in a Medicare Advantage plan and dropping Medigap supplement coverage. And among professional brokers who place coverage for a living, I have encountered only one who gets it and will share the potential downsides with her clients. If things reach the point where you want to enroll in Medicare Advantage, I would be glad to introduce her to you. She is based and licensed to sell in Pennsylvania.

I do not know who you spoke with for a quote, but it was not Medicare. And if you reached the point where you asked for a quote, there is a decent chance that you missed some important details along the way. A good starting point would be reading the health plan contract. Aetna calls this an Evidence of Coverage, and it is an exhaustive 200+ page read. But after investing the time, you will have questions that need answers.

These are some of the consequences of enrolling in Medicare Advantage that are not evident to many of us:

- You will lose the flexibility you have with Original Medicare to choose any physician who participates in the Medicare program. This is counter intuitive, since as we get older and health issues continue to mount, access to the practitioners who are the best at what they do becomes more important. In most geographic areas that I have encountered in my practice, only 33% - 50% of the physicians who participate in Original Medicare participate in Medicare Advantage plans. I looked at one specialty – Cardiology – within 25 miles of Mt. Pocono, and while I found 81 cardiologists who are Medicare participating, I only found 14 who participate the Aetna plan that you provided in your email.
- You will lose the control you currently have with Original Medicare in seeking care. Most Medicare Advantage plans, including this one, have more stringent prior authorization and referral requirements.
- Your out of pocket (OOP) cost exposure will be far greater with a Medicare Advantage plan. You almost certainly will reach Aetna's network OOP maximum (currently \$7,550) as you become older and require more care. Actually, your exposure could be greater, as the \$7,550 max may not cover situations where you use an out of network provider. Some of the cost sharing with this Aetna plan is daunting, like 20% coinsurance for chemotherapy drugs. For most receiving chemotherapy, the \$7,550 max could be reached after one month of treatment. By comparison,

cost exposure with your Medigap Plan N is peanuts – the current \$226 Part B deductible plus \$20/visit for most physician services.

What should you do? Generally, I suggest at least the following to clients who are considering a Medicare Advantage plan:

- Be suspicious of anything that sounds too good to be true. Dig deeper. Are you being gifted with a \$0 premium Medicare Advantage plan, or will you incur cost, restrictions, and inconvenience in return? What about throw in benefits, like dental? What is their real value? On the surface, a \$2,000 annual dental benefit with \$0 copay sounds great, but I wonder how useful Aetna dental would be to you. While 19 Aetna participating general dentists appear within 25 miles of Mt. Pocono, I could not find any participating periodontists or endodontists.
- Try to avoid overthinking this. The insurers are going to profit from insuring you regardless of whether you stay with a Medigap supplement and a Part D plan or switch to an all-in-one Medicare Advantage plan. Instead, focus on whether you can recover from a bad decision, if you make one. If you decide to drop your current coverages and enroll in a Medicare Advantage plan, what if this decision does not work out for you? If you want to return to your current coverages someday, do not expect to be welcomed with open arms by a Medigap supplement insurer. You should expect to be medically underwritten. Following medical underwriting, the insurer could decide to limit initial benefits and coverage or deny your application completely.

Glad to discuss. Let me know a day/time or two that works for you.

Best regards.