



**PARTNERS** in D

Pharmacists helping you get the most  
out of Medicare drug benefits

# Partners in D Program Fact Sheet

Medicare's Prescription Drug Coverage program, commonly known as Medicare Part D, promises greater access to prescription medication for millions of elderly Americans. However, the program is cumbersome, complex, and confusing for many seniors, especially those in underserved communities. *Partners in D* is a California statewide outreach initiative, funded by a grant from the Amgen Foundation, that reaches into the community and provides seniors with one-on-one Medicare Part D counseling. Behind the scenes, the initiative educates student pharmacists, pharmacists, and other healthcare professionals about the intricacies of Part D, giving them the information they need to explain to seniors their Medicare Part D choices and the impact of different coverage options. Through *Partners in D*, these Medicare Part D-trained health care professionals demonstrate their advocacy for the long-term physical and financial health of the patients they serve. The program is a collaboration among 7 California schools of pharmacy.

## **The Challenge**

Launched in January, 2006, the Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage program, commonly known as Medicare Part D, offers prescription drug coverage to all Medicare participants who enroll, regardless of income, health status, or prescription drug use. Even with its potential to improve the lives of millions, the program can be confusing. With dozens of 70 Medicare prescription drug plans available in California, choosing one can be overwhelming. The resources provided by Medicare to assist in selection do not always take into account the individual circumstances and needs of each senior. While Medicare offers telephone and online guidance and enrollment for its drug plans, many seniors do not have easy telephone or computer access, and many seniors are not computer savvy. There is an even greater need for individual assistance among low-income and non-English speaking seniors.

## **The Solution: *Partners in D***

*Partners in D* brings Medicare Part D expertise into the community to meet these challenges head-on.

Specially trained student pharmacists with laptop computers and wireless internet

access go into local communities where seniors live and gather, and where they receive health care, to provide one-on-one Part D counseling to seniors in a variety of languages. During these counseling sessions, student pharmacists help seniors choose a drug plan during open enrollment periods or maximize their existing drug benefits, minimize potential time in the coverage gap also known as the "doughnut hole", and evaluate drug plan costs. School of Pharmacy faculty advisors are on hand to assist if needed.

In preparation for their community outreach, *Partners in D* student pharmacists receive intense instruction about Medicare Part D from school of pharmacy faculty experts. Student pharmacists also teach health professional students and practitioners across disciplines about Part D with the goal of creating a community of informed healthcare professionals who have the knowledge needed to help seniors benefit from the Medicare Part D program.

*Partners in D* is continually assessed through research and improved based upon research results.

## Pharmacists on the Front Lines

*Partners in D* recognizes that the pharmacist's role in the healthcare system extends far beyond dispensing medications. Rather, pharmacists serve as a key bridge between patients and the healthcare system. They are on the front lines of healthcare and see their patients on a regular basis. Because of their access to seniors and their medication expertise, pharmacists can help seniors get the best and most appropriate medications possible under Medicare Part D, while closely considering cost. Because they are integral members of the communities in which they work, pharmacists have the potential to serve the Part D needs of underserved seniors in their communities particularly well and become powerful advocates for their medication needs.

*Partners in D* prepares student pharmacists to serve seniors most in need and advocate for their health, even before students graduate from pharmacy school.

## The Partners of the Program

*Partners in D* was created by student pharmacists and faculty members at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) School of Pharmacy. It is supported by a \$3.7 million grant from the Amgen Foundation over 3.5 years. Drs. Marilyn Stebbins and Helene Levens Lipton of the School's Department of Clinical Pharmacy are the co-principal investigators of the grant.

The program is a collaboration among 7 California schools of pharmacy at: UCSF; Loma Linda University; Touro University, California; the University of California, San Diego; the University of the Pacific; the University of Southern California; and Western University of Health Sciences. The expertise, perspectives, and experiences colleagues from these schools bring to the program are essential to the program's success. Pharmacy faculty members from these 7 pharmacy schools, a physician educator who is an expert in interdisciplinary

education, a public health expert who specializes in medication access, and an academic communications and planning expert comprise an active program planning board. The program works closely as well with community groups and organizations—partners that share a commitment to making reliable Medicare Part D information accessible to underserved California seniors.

## About Amgen Foundation

The Amgen Foundation ([www.amgen.com/citizenship/overview.html](http://www.amgen.com/citizenship/overview.html)) seeks to advance science education; improve patient access to quality care; and strengthen the communities where Amgen staff members live and work. Since 1991, the Foundation has made more than \$85 million in grants to local, regional, and national nonprofit organizations that impact society in inspiring and innovative ways. It has also supported disaster relief efforts both domestically and internationally.

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