



HEALTH AWARENESS

Seniors May Be Missing Important Online Medicare Resources Warning: Not Logging On May Be Bad For Your Health

(NAPSA)—More and more Americans are using the Internet for health and medical purposes. But older Americans may be missing out on access to important health resources available online, such as streamlined Medicare enrollment, billing and provider information.

A recent study by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation found that only 21 percent of American senior citizens have gone online to research health information, confirming that most elderly Americans are not using the Internet to become better informed about their health and their health care options.

Web sites such as www.medicare.gov offer such information, as well as information designed to help visitors understand their Medicare benefits and make educated health decisions. Medicare HMOs also let patients check the status of claims, find doctors and fill prescriptions online.

Unfortunately, according to a 2004 Pew Internet & American Life Project report titled "Older Americans and the Internet," "Seniors are also more likely than any other age group to be living with some kind of disability, which could hinder their capacity to get to a computer training center or read the small type on many Web sites."

"If you're an older American who doesn't have ready access to the Internet, there are new options," said Sam Klepper, general manager of Microsoft Corp.'s MSN TV. "A growing number of devices are being marketed that make it easier and more affordable for seniors and other Internet newcomers to go online."

For example, the MSN TV 2 Internet & Media Player sells for



about \$200 (U.S., plus subscription cost). It lets consumers check e-mail and surf the Web via a television from the comfort of their living room, and doesn't require computer experience to get started.

"These devices are ideal for someone who wants to take advantage of what the Internet has to offer, such as staying in touch with family and friends through e-mail, viewing photo slide shows or researching important health information, but who doesn't want the expense or complexity of a PC," Klepper said.

Some of these devices, such as MSN TV 2, also are helpful for those with less-than-perfect vision because Internet content can be viewed on a large television screen instead of a computer monitor, and text size can be increased to make viewing e-mail and Web site content easier.

"The Internet is moving from being a luxury to a necessity," Klepper said.

Fortunately, manufacturers are recognizing and meeting the needs of a broader group of consumers, by designing products that everybody can use to access important information available online.

More information about MSN TV can be found at www.msn.tv.com.