

Medicare & You

Quality-Of-Care Information Helps In Making Decisions

(NAPSA)—*Tommy G. Thompson, Secretary of Health and Human Services, answers a question about Medicare:*

Q. Is there any information available to help me choose the best care for myself or a family member?



Thompson

A. Yes. Medicare is committed to providing information, including information about the quality of care available to you, to help you make choices that are the best for you. You can get this information at Medicare's official Web site, www.medicare.gov, or by calling 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). This 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week helpline is available to help you with your Medicare questions. TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

In 2002, Medicare started public reporting on the quality of health care in various settings. By visiting www.medicare.gov on the Web, you can get information to help you compare and choose healthcare providers in your area.

Home Health Agencies—You can get information to help you find the best home health agency to meet your or your family member's needs for professional care at home. You can use this information to help compare home health agencies so you can make the best decision for you. To get this information, look at www.medicare.gov and select "Home Health Compare."

Nursing Homes—You can get information about the quality of care provided in individual nursing

homes all across the country. You can use this information as an additional resource when choosing or assessing the quality of care in a nursing home. To get this information, look at www.medicare.gov and select "Nursing Home Compare."

Medicare Health Plans—You can get information to help you compare the Medicare health plan options in your area. You can compare the quality of care from a health plan for a variety of services. This can help you find the Medicare health plan that's right for you. To get this information, look at www.medicare.gov and select "Medicare Personal Plan Finder."

Dialysis Facilities—You can use the information found at www.medicare.gov to help you compare information about dialysis facilities. Select "Dialysis Facility Compare." You will find detailed information about Medicare-approved dialysis facilities so you can make the best choice for you.

In addition, Medicare is in the early stages of developing public reporting information about the quality of care available in the nation's hospitals. Medicare expects to start this effort sometime in 2004.

These and other information resources are available to help you understand as much about the Medicare program as possible. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the federal agency that runs the Medicare program, and I want you to have all the information you need to make important healthcare decisions.