

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Joanne Marlin

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My Medicare Matters, 201-722-1597

**Seniors & Others with Medicare Urged to Learn about
New Prescription Drug Coverage That Could Provide Better Access
to Their Medicines and Help Save Money**

*Advocates Urge Families to Get Information, Make Their Own Decisions;
Mi Medicare Importa Program is Here to Help*

Washington, DC, March 14 2006 – Advocates who work with seniors and younger people with disabilities are urging them to take the time *now* to get more information about the new Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage, because the coverage can make such a difference to their health and the quality of their lives, according to Jane Delgado, Ph. D., president and CEO of the National Alliance for Hispanic Health and a founding member of the Access to Benefits Coalition (ABC).

“The new prescription drug plan is very important because it will help people buy their medicines,” she said. “The program can help people save money, up to hundreds of dollars a month, and to preserve their health.”

Dr. Delgado said that recent reports indicate millions of people with Medicare have not yet signed up for the coverage. To help seniors and their families get information that can assist them in making decisions about new prescription drug plans available to them, the ABC and the National Council on the Aging (NCOA) are sponsoring a national educational campaign, Mi Medicare Importa. The campaign features a special Web site www.MiMedicareImporta.org, and sponsors educational events in communities across the country. The campaign is supported with a grant from AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals LP.

The national program is an unprecedented effort to help people with Medicare assess their personal situation, understand their choices, compare plan options and make the enrollment decision that is right for their health and their financial situation. Mi Medicare Importa is not involved with any specific insurance company or plan, so the information provided is unbiased and objective.

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Wendy Zenker of the NCOA, who is the director of Mi Medicare Importa campaign, says the campaign was created “to help seniors and others with Medicare figure out the new coverage and see how it can help them.”

Ms. Zenker said that the Web site is especially useful to families, children and grandchildren of seniors, who want to help their elder family members learn how to take advantage of the new benefit.

“MiMedicareImporta.org will be available for use by people with Medicare, by their family and friends, or by professionals and organizations. We created the site to be very easy to understand, and it has all kinds of information, answers to questions, and tools that can be used to learn about Part D, assess an individual’s rights and options and find and compare plans, and all of this information is in Spanish,” she noted. People with Medicare with modest incomes will also be able to find out about the Extra Help available from the Social Security Administration.

Mi Medicare Importa mobile education teams are also involved in educational events sponsored by trusted community-based organizations in 38 cities across the U.S. One third of these teams include Spanish-speaking bilingual educators.

At these community events, seniors come in and ask questions, pick up educational materials, and can also sit down with benefits educators who will provide individualized, personal attention and guidance as they learn about the new coverage and their options. The educators will use the latest technology via Web-enabled computers, to help seniors learn about the new prescription drug coverage, assess their situation, understand the choices they need to make, use Internet-based tools such as NCOA’s BenefitsCheckUpRx or the Medicare Plan Finder to assess their situation, and find and compare plans. If and when seniors are ready to join a plan, the educators may assist them in completing the online enrollment process or advise them about other methods for joining a plan.

Where assistance is not locally available, seniors can call the National Alliance for Hispanic Health’s toll-free *SU FAMILIA* National Hispanic Family Health Helpline at 1-866-783-2645 to talk to a bilingual health information specialist.

“We can all help our parents and grandparents, friends and neighbors,” Dr. Delgado said. “We should be asking them ‘Have you looked at the new coverage,’ and if they have not, help them understand their rights and options and how to make the right choice. We can make a difference now for our health and the health of our loved ones.”

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About Mi Medicare Importa

Mi Medicare Importa is a comprehensive education program that uses a special website and community-based events to help people with Medicare and their families understand the new Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage, assess their personal situation, understand their choices, compare plan options and make the enrollment decision that is right for their health and their financial situation. It is sponsored by the National Council on the Aging and the Access to Benefits Coalition, with support from AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals LP.

About The National Council on the Aging

Founded in 1950, the National Council on the Aging is a national network of organizations and individuals dedicated to improving the health and independence of older persons and to increasing their continuing contributions to communities, society and future generations.

About The Access to Benefits Coalition

The Access to Benefits Coalition is dedicated to ensuring that Medicare beneficiaries with limited incomes know about and can make the best use of all available resources for reducing the costs of prescription drugs, including the extra help available through the Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage.

About the National Alliance for Hispanic Health

The National Alliance for Hispanic Health is the nation's oldest and largest network of Hispanic health professionals. The nation's action forum for Hispanic health, Alliance members deliver services to over 13 million persons every year making a daily difference in the lives of Hispanic communities. For more information, visit the Alliance's website (www.hispanichealth.org) or call 1-866-SU-FAMILIA (1-866-783-2645).