

What is Westat?

Westat is a research company in Rockville, Maryland. It has conducted studies on many different subjects since 1961. We at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services have chosen Westat to help conduct this study.

How will I recognize the MCBS interviewer?

The interviewer who calls on you is a Westat representative living in your area. He or she will be wearing a Westat identification badge that looks like the card shown below.



Any other questions?

If you have questions about MCBS, please call the MCBS information line at Westat between 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. (eastern standard time). The toll-free number is 1-800-937-8286.

If you have any comments about any part of the study, including suggestions for reducing the time it takes to complete, please send them to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, P.O. Box 26684, Baltimore, Maryland, 21207; and to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, Washington, DC, 20503.

MCBS – Because we care!



A National Study of Health Care and Costs for Medicare Beneficiaries

Sponsored by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



You have been selected to take part in an important study called the Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey. Here are some answers to questions people frequently ask about the study.

What is the Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey?

The Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey, called MCBS, is a study to learn more about the people who use Medicare. The MCBS began to collect information about the health and cost of care for people in September 1991. If you take part in this ongoing study, a specially trained interviewer will come to your house. The interviewer will ask you questions about your health care and how much it costs. We at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services oversee Medicare. In sponsoring this study, we hope to gain valuable insight from you.

Why is the Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey needed?

The study will help us to understand how Medicare affects you and what, if any, problems you have with it. The information you give us will be used to make Medicare work better for you. This will help now and in the future.

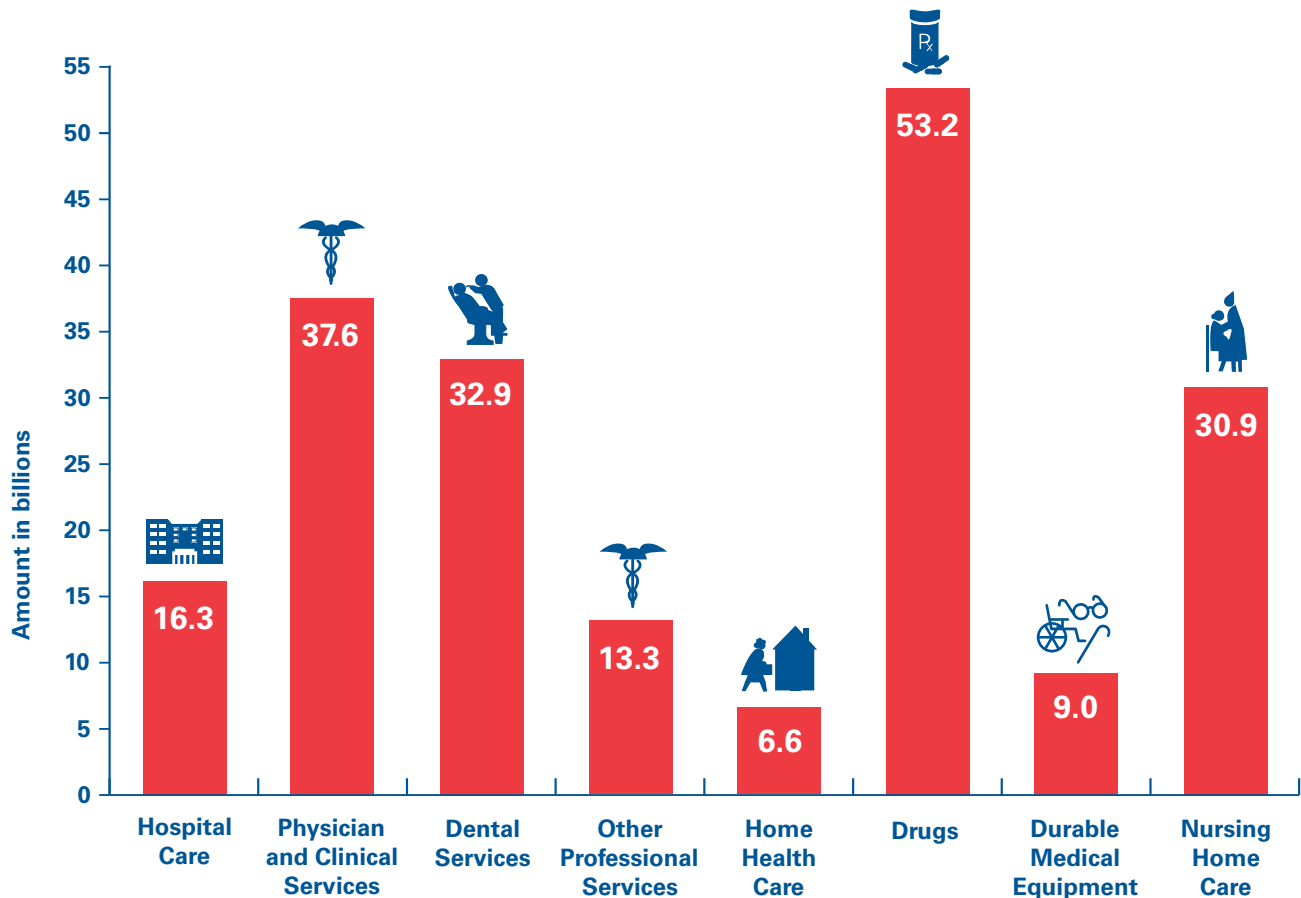
How was I selected for the Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey?

It would be too big a job to talk to everyone on Medicare. We have picked a group of people to represent the whole country; 16,000 people were selected at random to take part in this study. You were one of those chosen.

How do I know my answers will be kept private?

We guarantee it. Only people working on the MCBS will see the information you give the interviewer. The Privacy Act of 1974 states that the answers you give will not be connected with your name. The information you give will be used only for statistics. It will be put into graphs and tables like the one below.

2003 Out-of-Pocket Payments



Source: Centers For Medicare and Medicaid Services, Office of the Actuary: (2003).

How much time will this take?

Because we will use a computer to record your information, the time required to complete the interview is reduced. Most respondents will spend less than an hour answering the questions.

The MCBS collects information three times a year. Your interviewer may be contacting you in the future for additional information.

What will you be asking about?

In the beginning, we will ask you about where you usually go for health care and how you feel about this care.

During future interviews, we will ask a number of questions about the types of health care that you use and the costs of those services. We will ask you about any visits that you may make to the dentist or doctor's office and any stays in the hospital.

Your interviewer will give you a planner that should help you in responding to questions on cost and use of health care services. You may find this helpful. Some participants in the study have other ways of keeping track of their health care costs; please use the way that is easiest for you.

Why is it important to answer all the questions?

We want to improve Medicare. To do that, we need to learn about your experiences with health care. Each person who takes part makes the study stronger. You do not have to answer any question you don't want to answer. However, most people find the interview enjoyable. We cover topics just like those that come up when you chat with your neighbor.

What will be done with the information collected from the MCBS?

We will be producing statistical reports. These reports will describe the use and cost of health care for Medicare beneficiaries, where you go for care, how you feel about your care, and payment for health care.

As a result of your participation in MCBS, we will be providing you with summaries of the reports produced, as well as information that we collect through the MCBS.