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MCBS

Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey



FALL | 2025

Hello! Thank you for your participation in the Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey. We appreciate the time and effort you give to this important research. This edition of the newsletter contains updates on health care pricing, information on companion animals, and a delicious chicken cutlet recipe!

What is the MCBS

The Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey, or MCBS, is an ongoing survey of people with Medicare. This survey is designed to represent the entire population of individuals currently enrolled in Medicare, including people living in a community setting or in long term care facilities. The survey's main goal is to help policymakers improve Medicare by providing a wealth of information about you, the beneficiary,

and your overall health care experience. We do this by recording costs associated with health care services, as well as information on topics including satisfaction with care, knowledge of the Medicare program, and ease of accessing needed health care. The MCBS is sponsored by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and is conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago.



About NORC

NORC at the University of Chicago is an objective, nonpartisan, research organization. NORC conducts research and analysis that decision-makers trust, providing high quality insights for more than eight decades. We have professional interviewers across the nation working on the MCBS. As a professional research organization, NORC is deeply committed to protecting the privacy of all respondents' personal information; the answers you provide will be kept private to the extent permitted by law, as prescribed by the Federal Privacy Act of 1974.



To learn more about NORC or to contact the MCBS team please:



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Visit us at
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cms.gov/MCBS

Medicare in the News¹

If you have a Medicare Advantage plan, you may be familiar with prior authorization – if not, prior authorization is the process of getting Medicare’s approval for a doctor to provide certain medications or procedures. This summer, leadership from Medicare and the Department of Health and Human Services discussed improvements to the prior authorization system with twelve insurance companies. Medicare Advantage insurers such as Aetna, Blue Cross Blue Shield, and UnitedHealthcare have agreed to new rules that will make the prior authorization system easier to navigate. These companies have pledged to lower the number of services that require prior authorization, as well as increase transparency about decisions and appeals. For example – if a patient is denied coverage for a medical procedure, the insurers will make sure that the doctor receives enough information about the denial to make a plan with the patient. These changes aim to simplify the prior authorization process for patients, providers, and insurance companies alike. You can learn more about these improvements by reading the official announcement (<https://www.hhs.gov/press-room/kennedy-oz-cms-secure-healthcare-industry-pledge-to-fix-prior-authorization-system.html>).



MCBS Data in Action²

In today’s digital age, many people use the Internet to call friends or family, read the news, or make appointments with their doctor. Your participation in the MCBS helps reveal larger trends that policymakers study to improve healthcare quality and access. Medicare used MCBS data from 2023 to learn how internet access and usage differs between people living in cities versus rural areas. This research helps Medicare improve healthcare services for all beneficiaries. The results show that 91% of Medicare enrollees in urban metropolitan areas have Internet access, compared to 86% of Medicare enrollees in rural, non-metropolitan areas. They are also more likely to use the Internet daily, with 52% of metropolitan areas and 42% of those in rural areas logging on every day. Almost a third of Medicare enrollees in metropolitan areas used the Internet to fill a prescription within the last twelve months.

If you’d like to learn more, please visit the MCBS Interactives website (mcbs-interactives.norc.org/) to explore these data! You can also read the MCBS 2024 Bibliography ([cms.gov/data-research/research/medicare-current-beneficiary-survey/bibliography/2024](https://www.cms.gov/data-research/research/medicare-current-beneficiary-survey/bibliography/2024)) to see what researchers learned from beneficiaries last year. Finally, take a look at the new MCBS infographic (<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/medicare-current-beneficiary-survey-overview-infographic.pdf>) to get a brief overview of the survey.

Internet Access and Frequency of Use

Reside in Metropolitan Area	Reside in Non-metropolitan Area
91% have internet access	86% have internet access
52% use internet daily	42% use internet daily
7% don't use internet at all	10% don't use internet at all

Type of Internet Use

Participated in Video or Voice Calls Over the Internet in the Last Year		Used the Internet to Fill a Prescription in the Last Year	
Metro	Non-metro	Metro	Non-metro
49%	37%	32%	22%

Source: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), 2023 Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey (MCBS) Internet Access and Use Among Medicare Beneficiaries Living in the Community Early Public Use File (PUF).

Chicken Cutlets with Creamy Tomato Sauce³

Cook Time: 20 Minutes

This year's recipe is a modern classic: chicken cutlets paired with a creamy sun-dried tomato sauce. Also known as "Marry Me Chicken," this delicious dinner is a breeze to make on busy weeknights.

Ingredients:

- 1 pound chicken cutlets (chicken thighs are a cheaper, juicier option)
- salt
- ground black pepper
- ½ cup oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, plus 1 tablespoon oil from the jar
- ½ cup finely chopped shallots (can substitute with onion)
- 2-3 cloves of garlic, minced
- 2 cups spinach (optional)
- ½ cup dry white wine (can substitute with chicken or vegetable broth, even pasta water if you serve with pasta!)
- ½ cup heavy cream (can substitute with evaporated milk, half-and half, or non-dairy cream)
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley



Instructions:

1. Season your chicken with salt and pepper, around ¼ to ½ teaspoon of each.
2. Heat sun-dried tomato oil in a large skillet over medium heat.
3. Add the chicken and cook, turning once, until browned and an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part registers 165°F, about 6 minutes total.
4. Transfer to a plate and set aside.
5. Add sun-dried tomatoes, garlic, and shallots to the pan. Cook, stirring, for 1-2 minutes.
6. Increase heat to medium high and add wine. Stir, scraping up any browned bits, until the liquid has mostly evaporated, about 2 minutes.
7. Reduce heat to medium low and stir in cream, spinach (optional), and any accumulated juices from the chicken and season with salt and pepper to taste. Simmer for 2 minutes.
8. Return the chicken to the pan and turn to coat with the sauce. Serve the chicken topped with the sauce and parsley. Serve with carbohydrate of choice—rice, pasta, bread, potatoes—the world is your oyster!

MCBS Word Search Puzzle

Instructions: Can you spot these words throughout the newsletter? They can go down, right, and diagonally (but not backwards) – happy hunting!

T Y O Y O S T C Q T X D W E P Q P I
H K H C V M T X Z X N M V S R U F C
E T R A N S P A R E N T B T E L C H
R S O I N T E R N E T D V I S D O I
A T T M N Q R O Y F R G I M C M M C
P D Y V A L M L R O H H A A R P P K
E T S P M T A Z C K X R S T I V A E
U P X C S K O A F Z M P B E P B N N
T L F D M O U N T A I N S V T T I C
I Y W C V M E U G G Q E O Q I X O R
C X S P A R K Y X R J D C Q O X N O
C B A J X D G M J D U O V T N K G J

Word Bank

Prescription, transparent,
therapeutic, companion,
mountains, estimate,
internet, chicken,
sparky, tomato

How Our Pets Support Us^{4,5}



Companion animals, such as dogs, cats, and even rabbits, play a significant role in supporting patients of all kinds, emotionally and psychologically. Studies have shown that spending time with pets can help reduce stress, lower blood pressure, and improve overall well-being. For cancer patients, pets offer comfort during difficult treatments and provide a sense of purpose through daily care routines. This “protective relationship” is characterized by unconditional positive attachments, emotional support, and a sense of security. Patients who feel securely attached to their pets often report higher life satisfaction and lower levels of depression; they often describe their pets as being attuned to their emotions, offering silent companionship during challenging times.

Organizations like CancerCare’s Pet Assistance & Wellness (PAW) program assist patients in managing pet care during treatment, recognizing the therapeutic benefits of pet companionship. Additionally, oncology nurses are encouraged to assess patients’ relationships with their pets and provide resources to support these bonds. In summary, companion animals serve as valuable caregivers, offering emotional support and enhancing the quality of life for patients.

Meet the Field Interviewer: Karen Hoffman



My name is Karen Hoffman, and I live in Franklin, Ohio. I moved to Ohio in 1974. My father was in the military, and I have lived in Germany, New York, and Maryland. I was born in Dover, Delaware and hope to visit there one day, as I was only 1 year old when we left. I have one son who just graduated from high school and is pursuing a degree in Mechanical Engineering. I also have a dog named Sparky. I love vacationing at the beach - one of our favorite places to go to is Fripp Island in South Carolina. One of my favorite things about Fripp Island is the deer that inhabit the island. They are so docile and everywhere on the island. I like doing anything outdoors and hiking in the mountains.



I have been with NORC since 2010 and have worked on the MCBS since 2014. My favorite part of working on the MCBS is the respondents that I am so lucky to talk with. You truly are the most important part of the MCBS, and I appreciate all you do to help improve Medicare. Your commitment to the MCBS is inspiring and I appreciate every one of you. The hardest part of the MCBS is when the respondents have completed their time with the MCBS and saying “goodbye.” I want to thank all of you for your time and effort that you have put into the MCBS, because you are really making a big difference in the Medicare program.

Sources

1. <https://www.hhs.gov/press-room/kennedy-oz-cms-secure-healthcare-industry-pledge-to-fix-prior-authorization-system.html>
2. <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/internet-access-and-use-among-medicare-beneficiaries-living-community-metropolitan-residence-status.pdf>
3. <https://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/276341/chicken-cutlets-with-sun-dried-tomato-cream-sauce>
4. <https://oncologybuddies.com/2025/06/02/companion-animals-as-caregivers>
5. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11205-025-03574-1?cjdata=MXxOfDB8WXww&utm_medium=affiliate&utm_source=commission_junction&utm_campaign=CONR_BOOKS_ECOM_GL_PBOOK_ALWYS_DEEPLINK&utm_content=textlink&utm_term=PID100093539&CJEVENT=92ba5067417011f082

Answer Key

T	Y	O	Y	O	S	T	C	Q	T	X	D	W	E	P	Q	P	I
H	K	H	C	V	M	T	X	Z	X	N	M	V	S	R	U	F	C
E	T	R	A	N	S	P	A	R	E	N	T	B	T	E	L	C	H
R	S	O	I	N	T	E	R	N	E	T	D	V	I	S	D	O	I
A	T	T	M	N	Q	R	O	Y	F	R	G	I	M	C	M	M	C
P	D	Y	V	A	L	M	L	R	O	H	H	A	A	R	P	P	K
E	T	S	P	M	T	A	Z	C	K	X	R	S	T	I	V	A	E
U	P	X	C	S	K	O	A	F	Z	M	P	B	E	P	B	N	N
T	L	F	D	M	O	U	N	T	A	I	N	S	V	T	T	I	C
I	Y	W	C	V	M	E	U	G	G	Q	E	O	Q	I	X	O	R
C	X	S	P	A	R	K	Y	X	R	J	D	C	Q	O	X	N	O
C	B	A	J	X	D	G	M	J	D	U	O	V	T	N	K	G	J