

Medicare Would Cover Buchwald

I read Art Buchwald's March 12 Commentary article "Life Is Good Here At The Hospice" with interest. It was funny and poignant. But, as a nurse and Medicare advocate, I did not laugh when Mr. Buchwald wrote that he has "gotten so well that Medicare won't pay for me anymore."

In fact, Medicare hospice coverage is available when the beneficiary is likely to have less than six months to live. Certainly Mr. Buchwald meets this standard, given that he has stopped dialysis treatment and his physician thought he would only live two to three weeks. It is likely that he should still be getting Medicare hospice coverage.

It is unfortunate that Mr. Buchwald was given this misinformation. It is even more unfortunate that this scenario is constantly repeated with terminally ill Medicare beneficiaries. He may have outlived his physician's prediction of his demise by weeks, but Mr. Buchwald certainly still meets the six-month criteria.

Mr. Buchwald, or any Medicare beneficiary, when confronted with a denial of Medicare coverage, should question and appeal. So, for Mr. Buchwald and all Medicare beneficiaries: If you are told something about Medicare coverage that doesn't sound quite right, request an appeal. Contact the Center for Medicare Advocacy (860-456-7790 or www.medicareadvocacy.org) if you need help.

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