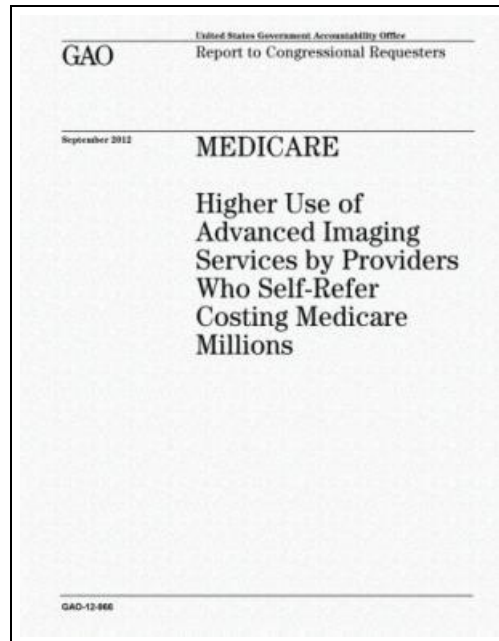


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(Mr. Demario Trantow)


MEDICARE: HIGHER USE OF ADVANCED IMAGING SERVICES BY PROVIDERS WHO SELF-REFER COSTING MEDICARE MILLIONS



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Createspace. Paperback. Book Condition: New. This item is printed on demand. Paperback. 54 pages. Dimensions: 11.0in. x 8.5in. x 0.1in. From 2004 through 2010, the number of self-referred and non-self-referred advanced imaging services--magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and computed tomography (CT) services--both increased, with the larger increase among self-referred services. For example, the number of self-referred MRI services increased over this period by more than 80 percent, compared with an increase of 12 percent for non-self-referred MRI services. Likewise, the growth rate of expenditures for self-referred MRI and CT services was also higher than for non-self-referred MRI and CT services. GAOs analysis showed that providers referrals of MRI and CT services substantially increased the year after they began to self-refer--that is, they purchased or leased imaging equipment, or joined a group practice that already self-referred. Providers that began self-referring in 2009--referred to as switchers--increased MRI and CT referrals on average by about 67 percent in 2010 compared to 2008. In the case of MRIs, the average number of referrals switchers made increased from 25. 1 in 2008 to 42. 0 in 2010. In contrast, the average number of referrals made by providers who remained self-referrers or non-self-referrers declined during this period. This comparison suggests that the increase in the average number of referrals for switchers was not due to a general increase in the use of imaging services among all providers. GAOs examination of all providers that referred an MRI or CT service in 2010 showed that self-referring providers referred about two times as many of these services as providers who did not self-refer. Differences persisted after accounting for practice size, specialty, geography, or patient characteristics. These two analyses suggest that financial incentives for self-referring providers were likely a major factor driving the increase in referrals. GAO estimates that in 2010, providers...

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