

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

MEDICARE UNMASKED

To the Judges:

The Wall Street Journal forced the government in 2014 to release important Medicare data kept secret for decades, and in a sweeping investigative series uncovered abuses that cost taxpayers billions.

Last year, the U.S. made public Medicare billing data by doctors for the first time since 1979. The government acted because of successful litigation by Journal parent Dow Jones & Co. and amid persistent reporting on Medicare by Journal reporters.

The Journal used the newly released data to highlight a toxic mixture of medicine and greed in the nation's health-care system, detailing numerous ways in which U.S. taxpayers are on the hook for nearly \$60 billion in bogus Medicare payments each year. In the process, the Journal paved the way for other news organizations to dig into the federal system.

The Journal's efforts "changed the whole paradigm," allowing all of the media to uncover potential medical fraud and abuse, said Donald White of the Office of Inspector General at the Department of Health and Human Services. "And now that (the government) has released that data, it realizes it's going to have to release more."

In the process, the Journal has struck a major blow for gaining access to government information at a time when the Obama administration is fighting to keep it secret.

The reporting in our series, "Medicare Unmasked," had major impact.

After a piece examined high payments to pain specialists to test for PCP and other drugs rarely abused by seniors, the federal agency formally rejected industry proposals to cover even more tests.

The Journal revealed that a high-profile laboratory that collected hundreds of millions of dollars from Medicare used the controversial practice of paying doctors to send it patients' blood for testing. Two weeks after the Journal article, the lab's CEO resigned under pressure.

A separate blockbuster examined medical providers who collected more from Medicare for a single procedure than anyone else — and by large margins. Soon after, the Journal broke news of an FBI investigation into one of the providers it had identified as an outlier.

And an article showing how oncologists use a lucrative anti-anemia drug on cancer patients despite counter-indications prompted some patients to end that treatment, according to a prominent oncologist and medical journal editor.

The Journal has been widely recognized for its legal and journalistic efforts. Margaret Sullivan, the New York Times Public Editor, praised the Journal for its "time, expense and persistence" in pursuing and writing about Medicare, calling it a "cornerstone of investigative reporting."

A Washington Post editorial said the newly released Medicare data "begin to illuminate the workings of a complex system of fee-for-service medicine whose seemingly uncontrollable costs have challenged U.S. policymakers for decades

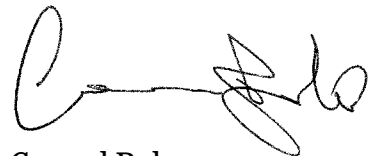
— yet disclosure had been resisted by doctors, who felt it would invade their financial privacy or distort public discussion by disseminating raw, out-of-context information.”

The Journal did more than simply present the data. A team of reporters and data experts created numerous programs to analyze and make sense of the numbers. The effort generated a series of interactive graphics, charts and other art, which the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan think tank, cited for its clarity and “a great deal of nuance.”

“You’re really providing a great public service,” said Leigh McKenna, of the National Health Care Anti-Fraud Association, a private-public partnership that in November 2014 awarded the Journal its Excellence in Public Awareness Award.

The Wall Street Journal’s successful efforts to procure this Medicare data and its “Medicare Unmasked” reporting generated change for the public benefit. I am proud to nominate this series for the Pulitzer Prize for Investigative Reporting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gerard Baker", written in a cursive style.

Gerard Baker