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'No incentive to care' about Medicare

Chris Woodward - OneNewsNow - 10/10/2011

Exploitation of Medicare by drug abusers is a long-standing problem, according to an expert on health policy.

Drug abusers continue to exploit prescription drugs, according to news reports that document the persistent problem with fraud by some Medicare patients. According to information first published in the *New York Times*, a Medicare recipient in Georgia received prescriptions for more than 3,600 oxycodone pills from 58 different prescribers. Another recipient in California got prescriptions for a nearly five-year supply of drug patches for cancer patients.

[Cato Institute](#) produced a [video](#) over the summer in which Michael Cannon, director of health policy studies, detailed other reports of fraud, including a dentist who once billed Medicaid for nearly 1,000 procedures in a single day. Cannon says the government is partly to blame. "It's other people's money so no one really does anything about it," he says. "No one really cares because they don't have an incentive to care."

Senators Tom Carper (D-Delaware) and Scott Brown (R-Massachusetts) are exploring ways to tighten Medicare rules and reduce fraud, but Cannon says efforts like these bring legitimate patients and doctors more regulations and paperwork. When those patients and doctors look to Congress for help, lawmakers side with the constituents in fear they could be voted out of office.

"They may have the best of intentions," Cannon says, "but those proposals of theirs are not going to go anywhere until we drastically reform Medicare with vouchers and drastically reform Medicaid by bloc granting that money to the states." Cannon adds that this is not about Republicans or Democrats; rather, it is about returning control of healthcare to individuals.