

May 5, 2004

Saludos,

As we join today with Hispanic communities across the United States to celebrate *Cinco de Mayo*, it is fitting that we renew our commitment to helping families and neighbors to achieve good health. May is Older Americans Month and this year's theme is "Aging Well: Living Well." An important part of aging well and living well is management of chronic conditions, like diabetes. However, more than two-thirds of Hispanic older adults with chronic conditions do not have prescription coverage to help them manage diseases like diabetes. This *Cinco de Mayo* that is changing with new prescription benefits to help Medicare recipients.

Starting this month, those who receive Medicare and do not receive prescription coverage through Medicaid can sign-up for a Medicare-approved prescription discount card. The new cards will save you 10 to 25 percent on the cost of most of your medicines. You may also qualify for an additional \$1,200 over the next eighteen months to help you purchase your medicines if your income in 2004 is no more than \$12,569 if you are single or no more than \$16,862 if you are married.

To receive these benefits, select and sign-up for one of the Medicare-approved prescription discount cards available to you. Help in comparing cards is a free phone call away at **1-800-MEDICARE**. Information specialists are available who speak Spanish and English. By providing information on where you live, your annual income, and what medicines you take, the 1-800-MEDICARE information specialist can send you a personalized comparison of Medicare-approved prescription discount cards available to you. If you prefer, you can also get this information on the web at www.medicare.gov.

This is only a first step in new benefits to help Hispanic older adults age well and live well. Next year, additional preventive care benefits will be available to those who receive Medicare. One such benefit will be a free screening for those at risk for diabetes to help diagnose diabetes early and get the proper care to control diabetes and live a healthy life. Also, in 2006 new and more comprehensive help will be available to help Medicare recipients purchase their medicines.

For more information about healthy aging and safe medicine use visit the Administration on Aging at www.aoa.gov/language/language_espanol.asp (Spanish) or www.aoa.gov (English) or the Food and Drug Administration at www.fda.gov (English) or www.fda.gov/oc/spanish (Spanish). You can also call the National Alliance for Hispanic Health *Su Familia* National Family Health Helpline (1-866-SU-FAMILIA) for free and confidential health information in Spanish and English as well as help locating health services in your area.

We extend our best wishes for your Cinco de Mayo celebration. We look forward to working with you to support the efforts of Hispanic communities across the country to build a healthier future.

Sincerely,

Josefina G. Carbonell
Assistant Secretary for Aging
Administration on Aging
Health

Lester M. Crawford, DVM, PhD
Acting Commissioner
Food and Drug Administration

Jane L. Delgado, PhD, MS
President and CEO
National Alliance for Hispanic

