The US Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General (OIG) released a fraud alert warning Medicare beneficiaries of potentially fraudulent schemes that take advantage of the fears surrounding the COVID-19 public health emergency. The OIG warns that fraudsters are targeting Medicare beneficiaries through telemarketing, social media and even in-person, door-to-door contact. According to the OIG, the fraudulent schemes often involve an offer of a COVID-19 test in exchange for an individual providing personal information.

The OIG provided the public several tips on identifying and avoiding fraudulent schemes:

- Be cautious of unsolicited requests for personal information, such as your Medicare number;
- Be suspicious of unsolicited offers of COVID-19 tests or supplies;
- Ignore offers on social media of COVID-19 tests or treatment; and
- Only a physician or other qualified health care provider should recommend or approve requests for COVID-19 testing.

The OIG is also calling on the public to notify it of suspected fraud by contacting the National Center for Disaster Fraud Hotline (866) 720-5721 or disaster@leo.gov.
The OIG’s alert is a reminder to scrutinize requests for your personal information, especially where such requests are unsolicited or concern your health and do not come from a trusted health care provider.