

BREA NEWS

www.bnl.gov/bera/activities/brea/

Volume 14 Issue 6 Special Edition

September 2014

BREA Meetings

BREA meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month (except for August), at 1 p.m. in one of the conference rooms in Bldg. 400 (except where noted).

All BREA members are invited to attend and participate.

Meeting Schedule

October 14, 2014

November 18, 2014

December 9, 2014

BREA Officers

President

Ken Mohring
kenwadingriver@gmail.com

Vice President

Liz Seubert
liz.and.ev@gmail.com

Secretary

Louise Hanson
hanson.louise@gmail.com

Treasurer

Steve Shapiro
shapiro@bnl.gov

Newsletter Editors

Mona S. Rowe
mrowe@bnl.gov

Anita Cohen
afcohen@optonline.net

From the President

by Ken Mohring, kenwadingriver@gmail.com

This special edition of BREA News is published to assist our members with healthcare decisions we must make in the coming months because of major changes that the Laboratory is implementing concerning medical coverage for retirees. The Lab is making these changes to reduce and stabilize costs for both retirees and the Lab.

BREA recognizes that most retirees are generally satisfied with the existing Cigna plan and may be apprehensive about any new plan. But the Laboratory believes – and BREA agrees – that the changes will also give retirees more control over their healthcare choices so that we are able to select plans better tailored to our individual needs. This should result in costs comparable to those now incurred by retirees.

We may all wish that these changes were not necessary. Nevertheless, we must prepare to choose a course that works best for each of us.

Going forward, for medical coverage starting January 1, 2015, we will purchase medical insurance through a healthcare exchange. The Lab has chosen SelectQuote Senior, a private exchange with access to multiple top-rated insurance companies.

Change is always hard, especially the older we get. Under the circumstances, however, we believe that the Laboratory has chosen a path that will ease our transition to the new program.

(continued on page 2)

*"Change is
always hard,
especially the
older we get."*

From the President (continued from page 1)

Brookhaven is not alone in changing to a program that limits costs and provides a subsidy to retirees to help them procure coverage. Oak Ridge National Laboratory made the change July 2012 and other laboratories have made similar changes.

For several years, BREA officers and knowledgeable members have been monitoring medical programs at other national laboratories and making comparisons to Lab coverage. In November 2013, then-BREA President Dave Cox set up a committee to keep a closer watch on healthcare changes that would affect retirees. That committee met several times over the past seven months and more often recently as planned changes to medical coverage for retirees have been going through final Laboratory management and DOE approvals.

This newsletter contains basic facts plus questions and answers that came up after committee members attended a presentation about the new program. Also, you will soon receive detailed information from SelectQuote by mail. It is essential that you keep and read everything. If you live nearby, you should try to attend one of the information meetings that will be scheduled at the Lab. During the sign-up period, use your time wisely so you have time to consider your options. Lastly, it is important to pay close attention to required decision dates.

SelectQuote has a proven record of providing transition and follow-up services. The Lab is paying for their effort, so take advantage of their expertise. BREA will continue to monitor activities over the next months and will support the Laboratory effort so that everyone will have coverage starting January 1, 2015.

- Ken Mohring, kenwadingriver@gmail.com

Quick Facts

- Brookhaven Science Associates (BSA), which manages Brookhaven National Laboratory (BNL), is changing healthcare coverage for Medicare-eligible retirees and their Medicare-eligible dependents.
- If you are eligible for Medicare, your primary medical coverage is through Medicare. That will continue.
- As a benefit of retiring from Brookhaven Lab, you received secondary medical coverage subsidized by the Laboratory.
- The two medical plans (Cigna and HIP VIP) currently offered by Brookhaven to Medicare-eligible retirees and their eligible dependents will end on December 31, 2014.
- Before January 1, 2015, you will need to select a new plan.
- This change affects Medicare-eligible retirees, participants receiving BSA long-term disability benefits, and eligible dependents. If you have dependents in your family, each family member may elect the plan that best suits his/her needs.
- BSA will continue to subsidize a portion of your premium payments for your new plan. This BSA subsidy will be put into a special account set up for you and your eligible dependents. Look for details on this in an announcement from BSA.

(continued on next page)

- BSA has hired SelectQuote Senior to help you choose a new medical insurance plan. SelectQuote Senior, a division of SelectQuote Benefit Solutions, helps Medicare-eligible individuals find the medical coverage they need at the lowest price.
- With help from SelectQuote, you will choose a new medical plan through a private exchange, which offers many healthcare plans. This private exchange is different from the public exchanges connected to national healthcare reform.
- You will soon receive by mail detailed information from Brookhaven Lab and from SelectQuote.



Questions & Answers

1. Is this change permanent?

You will find this statement on all BSA documents: "BSA reserves the right to amend or terminate the benefit programs at any time and for any reason."

2. Will spouses of deceased retirees continue to be covered?

Medicare-eligible spouses of deceased retirees who are currently enrolled in the medical plan will be provided coverage through the exchange. They will also receive a BSA subsidy.

3. What reduces the cost of insurance outside of the current Cigna plan so that plans under SelectQuote are less expensive and as good as or better than Cigna?

Competition between the insurance carriers and the higher volume of participants in the private marketplace results in more competitive pricing, which makes the cost of insurance lower than through BSA's self-insured plan, which is based on only BSA's participants, a small pool.

4. Should retirees consider plans that are not available through SelectQuote? Will these plans be covered under the health reimbursement account (HRA)?

Retirees should consider all healthcare options available. But BSA will set up and contribute to a retiree's HRA only if you elect a plan through SelectQuote Senior's exchange, which offers numerous insurance companies and plans throughout the U.S.

5. What if I cannot attend an early October information session at the Lab?

If you are unable to attend one of the three BNL on-site information sessions, a video of a Berkner Auditorium presentation will be posted online at www.bsa.sqbenefits.com. In addition, a SelectQuote representative will be calling participants during the first few weeks of October to confirm receipt of information materials and to schedule an enrollment appointment by phone.

6. I am hard of hearing. Can in-person assistance be arranged?

Unfortunately, SelectQuote does not provide this service. But trained representatives are available by phone six days a week, Monday through Saturday, and hearing-impaired telephone service is available.

(continued on page 4)

7. Outside the U.S., what expenses are covered under Medigap programs C, D, F, G, H, M and N? What does “up to the plan limits” mean (2014 Medicare & You, page 69)?

Medigap plans C, D, F, G, H, M and N pay 80 percent of the billed charges for certain medically necessary emergency care outside the U.S. after you meet a \$250 deductible for the year. These Medigap policies cover foreign travel emergency care if it begins during the first 60 days of your trip and if Medicare does not otherwise cover the care. NOTE: Foreign travel emergency coverage with Medigap policies has a lifetime limit of \$50,000.

8. Can prescription plans be changed without going into the insurance marketplace or incurring penalties?

You can change your prescription drug plan during the Medicare annual enrollment period.

9. When I talk with SelectQuote about choosing a plan, are there questions I should ask?

The following questions may be dependent on your particular circumstances but should be asked so that you fully understand what will happen if you wish to change coverage in the future.

*- Can drug plans be changed without penalties or without going into an “insurance pool or market place?”
- What are the penalties for changing healthcare in the future under a Medicare Supplemental Insurance (Medigap) policy?*

- If I am healthy and my spouse is not, and if we get one expensive plan for him or her and one less expensive plan for me, can I change if I develop a serious illness?

- Under a Medicare Advantage Plan or under a Medigap Plan, are pre-existing conditions a factor for premium amounts or coverage?

- What are the penalties for changing health care in the future under a Medicare Health Plan (Advantage Plan)?

10. “Medicare & You,” the official federal Medicare handbook, is an invaluable tool when evaluating Medicare and necessary supplemental insurance. Can copies of this be made available at the public meetings or can the best source of these booklets be publicized?

The 2014 “Medicare & You” booklet is available at <http://www.medicare.gov/Pubs/pdf/10050.pdf>. The 2015 edition should be available in mid-October. Every year, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services mails this booklet to the homes of people who are enrolled in Medicare, so participants receive annual copies automatically.

11. I have friends who are not BREA members. May I share this information with them?

Certainly. And ask them to join BREA! Carmen Benkowitz is BREA's Membership Secretary. Here's her email address: cmbenk@gmail.com.

Brookhaven Retired Employees Association

BREA c/o BERA

Brookhaven National Laboratory

Bldg. 400

Upton, NY 11973

Phone: (631) 344-2873

E-mail: brea@bnl.gov

Web: www.bnl.gov/bera/activities/brea/

