CORRESPONDENCE WITH A MEDICARE COMPUTER
(Originally published August 1967)

May 17, 1967

John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company
Boston, Massachusetts

HI Claim No. 42-68-2381

Dear Dr._____:

Upon reviewing Miss_____ claim, we notice that there is an overpayment in the amount paid you on February 21, 1967.

According to our records, the computer printed the check twice for your $150.00 charge on November 25, 1966; the first check was dated February 17, 1967, and the second one was issued February 21, 1967.

This created an overpayment of $120.00. We would greatly appreciate your kind cooperation in refunding this amount of $120.00 unless further charges will be submitted in behalf of Miss_____ at which time we could deduct the amount of the overpayment.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Respectfully,

May 22, 1967

Dear Mr. Hancock,

Won't you please ask your computer to look in his pockets for the check he is supposed to have sent me? I never received it and can't believe he ever mailed it. We have no record of having received it or deposited it, but then, I suppose the burden of proof is on me.

I guess I'm at your mercy because, if I refuse to refund something I never got, you could always hold back the next $120.00 I might be due, sort of like garnishing. You could have waited, you know, 'til the checks cleared and if you found it with my deposit stamp or name on it, you would know I had received it and wouldn't have to guess what must have happened.

We all know computers can make mistakes. If they couldn't, yours wouldn't now have to admit that he accidentally printed two checks for me instead of one. So maybe he made another and never mailed it. Please ask him again to look in his pockets. Or maybe if you just kick him hard it will fall out of some slot where it got stuck.

Yours sincerely,

Perplexed, M. D.

Note: What about the math error? $150 + $150 minus $150 does not equal $120.