

Medicare Fraud Strike Force Operation Leads to Charges against 94 Defendants, including 4 in South Texas



(July 17, 2010): Yesterday, the Department of Justice (DOJ) announced charges against 94 physicians, medical assistants, and health care company owners and executives in connection with alleged false Medicare claims amounting to more than \$251 million. 24 defendants from Miami account for approximately \$103 million of that amount. Four defendants were charged in Houston for their alleged roles in a \$3 million scheme to submit fraudulent claims for durable medical equipment (DME). Other arrests were made in Baton Rouge, Brooklyn, and Detroit.

The offenses charged include conspiracy to defraud the Medicare program, criminal false claims, violations of the anti-kickback statutes, and money laundering. The charges are based on a variety of fraud schemes, including physical therapy and occupational therapy schemes, home health care schemes, HIV infusion fraud schemes and durable medical equipment (DME) schemes.

Announcing the arrests, Attorney General Eric Holder said, "With today's arrests, we're putting would-be criminals on notice: Health care fraud is no longer a safe bet. It's no longer easy money. If you choose to engage in health care fraud, you will be found; you will be stopped; and you will be brought to justice."

The operation was conducted by the joint DOJ-HHS Medicare Fraud Strike Force, multi-agency teams of federal, state, and local investigators designed to combat Medicare fraud through the use of Medicare data analysis techniques and an increased focus on community policing. Strike Force teams are operating in seven cities in the United States: the five aforementioned cities, Los Angeles, and Tampa. AG Holder noted that the ongoing Strike Force initiative in South Florida has resulted in the indictments of 810 organizations and individuals since March 2007 and uncovered \$1.85 billion in improperly billed claims.

The Strike Forces are a part of Health Care Fraud Prevention and Enforcement Action Team (HEAT), which is made up of top level law enforcement and professional staff from the DOJ and HHS and their operating divisions. HEAT is dedicated to joint efforts across government to both prevent fraud and enforce current anti-fraud laws around the country.

Should you have any questions regarding these issues, don't hesitate to contact us. For a complementary consultation, you may call Robert W. Liles or one of our other attorneys at 1

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