



Client Alert



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Medicare Fraud Task Force Arrests More Than 100 Individuals

On February 17, 2011, more than 100 individuals, including doctors, nurses and healthcare executives, were arrested on charges of Medicare fraud. The arrests were made as part of the Health Care Fraud Prevention and Enforcement Action Team operated jointly by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Justice. Officials described the day as the nation's "largest-ever federal healthcare fraud takedown." The arrests were made in Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Dallas, Miami, Tampa and Baton Rouge and involved more than 700 federal agents.

In total, the arrested individuals are accused of obtaining over \$225 million from Medicare through false billing. Allegations include the filing of fraudulent claims, kickback operations, money laundering and identity theft. Some are accused of submitting claims to Medicare for treatments that were medically unnecessary or never provided. For example, a podiatrist in Detroit is alleged to have billed Medicare for removing toenails that were never actually removed. Others are charged with recruiting patients for hospitals and doctor's offices in exchange for lucrative cash kickbacks.

The Medicare fraud task force was initiated in March 2007. Since that time, more than 900 individuals have been charged and approximately 750 have been convicted. Recovery by the task force has been in the billions in fines and restitution payments. Last week's arrests signal the task force's continued momentum.

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