



Three plead guilty in Amtrak OIG-supported health care fraud investigation

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WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. – An owner of several shell companies purported to be laboratory marketing companies and two employees pleaded guilty to their roles in a health care fraud scheme in Federal Court recently.

Since 2014, special agents from Amtrak’s Office of Inspector General have been supporting the FBI-led Greater Palm Beach Health Care Fraud Task Force in its ongoing investigation into a series of complex insurance and health care fraud schemes in Florida. Amtrak’s insurance providers were fraudulently billed as result of some of these schemes. To date, the actions of the task force have resulted in 18 convictions of individuals involved in health care related crimes in Southern Florida.

John M. Skeffington, 52, of Boca Raton, pleaded guilty to participating in a health care fraud conspiracy and obstructing a criminal health care investigation. Co-defendants Babette Hayes, 58, of Sarasota, and Mona Montanino, 56, of Boca Raton, each pleaded guilty to obstructing a criminal health care investigation.

According to court documents, Skeffington, Hayes and Montanino established five shell companies, disguised as “laboratory marketing companies,” to unlawfully refer medically unnecessary and excessive bodily fluid tests for residents and patients of sober homes and substance abuse treatment facilities to various clinical laboratories and rural hospitals. While Hayes and Montanino were purported to be chief executive officers of some of the companies, it was Skeffington who operated and controlled the companies, directing the actions of Hayes and Montanino in their operation.

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In exchange for patient referrals, the laboratories and hospitals would provide a pre-set percentage of insurance payments (“kickbacks”) to the defendants, which they would then share with the sober homes and substance abuse treatment facilities. When the defendants became aware of the FBI-led investigation into fraudulent medical claims, they created dozens of falsified documents meant to obstruct the investigation and disguise the kickbacks as hourly payments for marketing services.

“We’re very proud to support the task force and remain committed to helping it to eliminate health care fraud in Southern Florida,” said George L. Dorsett, Amtrak OIG’s Assistant Inspector General for Investigations.

The Greater Palm Beach Health Care Fraud Task Force is comprised of more than 10 organizations including federal, state and local law enforcement agencies. The Amtrak Office of Inspector General was created in 1989 through an amendment to the Inspector General Act of 1978. Its mission is to provide independent, objective oversight of Amtrak’s programs and operations through audits and investigations focused on recommending improvements to Amtrak’s economy, efficiency, and effectiveness; preventing and detecting fraud, waste, and abuse; and providing Congress, Amtrak management, and Amtrak’s Board of Directors with timely information about problems and deficiencies relating to Amtrak’s programs and operations. More information is available at www.amtrakoig.gov.

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US Attorney, Southern District Florida Press Release: <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdfl/pr/ceos-and-owner-plead-guilty-facilitating-substance-abuse-treatment-fraud-scheme>