

Beat: News

Federal Health Care Fraud Charge Filed against Suburban Chicago Physician

Eliza Diaconescu, of Lake Forest, Ill.

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USPA NEWS - A suburban Chicago physician prescribed opioids to patients without a medical examination or visit and then fraudulently billed Medicare for the nonexistent treatment, according to a criminal charge filed in federal court.

ELIZA DIACONESCU, 73, of Lake Forest, Ill., is charged with one count of health care fraud. The charge is punishable by a maximum sentence of ten years in federal prison. Arraignment is scheduled for July 18, 2022, at 11:00 a.m., before U.S. Magistrate Judge Maria Valdez.

The charge was announced by John R. Lausch, Jr., United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; Robert J. Bell, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Division of the DEA; Mario Pinto, Special Agent-in-Charge of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General; Irene Lindow, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Division of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General; and Emmerson Buie, Jr., Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Field Office of the FBI. The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jared Hasten, Charles W. Mulaney, and Ernest Y. Ling.

The charge was brought by the U.S. Attorney's Office's Opioid Task Force, which was formed in 2019 for the purpose of combatting the growing number of unlawful distributions of controlled substances fueling the nation's opioid crisis.

A criminal information filed Thursday in federal court alleges that from 2016 to 2021, Diaconescu pre-signed blank prescriptions for hydrocodone, oxycodone, and fentanyl for patients of her pain clinic in Gurnee, Ill., so that the prescriptions could be provided to the patients when she was not at the clinic. The patients picked up the pre-signed prescriptions for the opioids from other workers at the clinic without having a contemporaneous examination with Diaconescu, the information states.

Diaconescu then knowingly submitted false claims seeking reimbursement from Medicare for the purported visits, knowing that such visits did not occur. Diaconescu and others at the clinic created false paperwork indicating that Diaconescu had face-to-face exams with patients when, in fact, the patients had come only to pick up the pre-signed prescriptions and had not visited with Diaconescu, the charge alleges.

The public is reminded that an information is not evidence of guilt. The defendant is presumed innocent and entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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Wendy writes for the United States Press Agency and is a former columnist with the Fulton County Expositor, Wauseon, Ohio.

Source: Department of Justice, U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of Illinois press release July 15, 2022

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