

Wilmington Doctor Settles Federal Case For Receiving Improper Medicare and Tricare Payments

By Administrator

Thursday, 05 December 2019 11:13 -

United States Attorney Robert J. Higdon, Jr. announced today that Dr. Damien Brezinski and his practice group, Wilmington Health, agreed to pay more than \$244,000 to settle civil claims under the False Claims Act for improper payments made under the Medicare and Tricare programs.

According to documents filed with the Court, this investigation began with a self-disclosure from New Hanover Regional Medical Center in Wilmington, North Carolina. The hospital reported that an internal audit uncovered potentially false claims for cardiac stenting procedures that Dr. Brezinski performed in that facility. The United States' independent investigation confirmed that, from 2010 to 2014, Dr. Brezinski repeatedly inserted arterial stents for patients whose medical records did not demonstrate a need for the procedures. Dr. Brezinski and his practice group, Wilmington Health, then billed those procedures to Medicare and Tricare, in violation of program requirements and the False Claims Act.

In addition to the resolution with Dr. Brezinski and Wilmington Health, New Hanover Regional Medical Center has separately agreed to repay nearly \$900,000 in facility fees it received related to the allegedly false claims.

“The United States takes healthcare fraud very seriously,” said U.S. Attorney Higdon. “Nowhere is that more true than when doctors knowingly perform medical procedures that their patients do not need. The United States will continue to vigorously pursue penalties and damages against health care providers who falsely certify the accuracy of claims they bill to Medicare and Tricare, and in the process risk the health and wellbeing of those under their care.”

The federal False Claims Act allows the United States to recover triple the money falsely obtained, plus substantial penalties for each false claim submitted. The government can also recoup investigative costs.

It should be noted that the claims resolved by settlement here are allegations only, and that there has been no judicial determination or admission of liability.

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The United States Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General and the Defense Criminal Investigative Service conducted the investigation of this case. Assistant United States Attorneys Michael Anderson and Neal Fowler represented the United States.