Three Ohio health-care companies pay $19.5 million to settle whistleblower cases

By Earl Rinehart
The Columbus Dispatch

Follow

Posted Jul 17, 2017 at 6:49 PM

The operators of three health-care companies operating in Ohio, including Columbus, have agreed to pay $19.5 million to resolve allegations that their companies falsified Medicare claims, federal authorities announced Monday.

The settlement resolves two whistleblower lawsuits filed against Foundations Health Solutions Inc., Olympia Therapy Inc. and Tridia Hospice Care Inc. and their executives, Brian Colleran and Daniel Parker. The companies and executives had business addresses in the Cleveland suburb of North Olmsted.

Prosecutors called Colleran the “principal architect of the schemes.” Neither he nor Parker could be reached for comment Monday.

The settlement will reimburse Medicare but also pay about $2.9 million to Vladimir Trakhter, a former Olympia employee, and a total of $740,00 to Paula Bourne and La’Tasha Goodwin, former Tridia employees in Columbus.

Trakhter sued in 2011 and Bourne and Goodwin did likewise the following year under the federal False Claims Act. The act permits private individuals to sue on behalf of the government for false claims and to share in any recovery.

The lawsuits were kept under seal until Friday, Benjamin Glassman, the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Ohio in Columbus, announced Monday. That gave the federal government time to investigate the allegations and decide whether to intervene, said Rick Morgan Jr., a Cincinnati attorney representing Bourne and Goodwin.

Trakhter was a Dayton resident working as a physical therapist assistant for Olympia. He alleged that beginning in January 2008, Olympia and Foundations Health Solutions — then
called Professional Services — submitted claims for medically unnecessary rehabilitation therapy services at 18 skilled-nursing facilities.

Trakhter alleged that several patients were injured when forced to do therapy that they could not physically tolerate.

In 2004, Bourne became executive director at Colleran-owned Highbanks Care Center on the Far North Side and later was executive director of Tridia Hospice, which operates in several Ohio cities. Goodwin was director of nursing at Highbanks beginning in 2006, and later was director of clinical services at Tridia. Their suit contends that beginning in April 2011, Tridia submitted claims for patients who were ineligible for the Medicare hospice benefit because Tridia had failed to conduct proper certifications or medical examinations.

“This is one of the largest nursing home operations in Ohio,” Glassman said. “It is unacceptable for an entity entrusted to care for our most vulnerable and elderly citizens to make decisions based on profit, not quality of care. Subjecting the elderly to inappropriate levels of therapy can be physically harmful, and failing to properly certify and recertify hospice patients can have a devastating impact on the patients and their families.”

As part of the settlement, Foundation Health Solutions and Colleran have entered into a five-year Corporate Integrity Agreement with the government designed to increase accountability and transparency, and to avoid or promptly detect future fraud and abuse.

erinehart@dispatch.com

@esrinehart

READ NEXT

The key stat to look at before you start your fantasy football draft
Did a bunch of singing servers steal $400K from this restaurant?
Adorable mouse is to blame for the spread of Lyme disease
How much vitamin D do you need?
New “Sesame Street” muppet in Afghanistan promotes gender equality