

NEWS

United States Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey
970 Broad Street, Seventh Floor
Newark, New Jersey 07102



Christopher J. Christie, U.S. Attorney

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Assistant U.S. Attorney:
ANTHONY MOSCATO, Jr.
973-645-2752

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 20, 2008

Elizabeth Doctor Pleads Guilty to
Engaging in Health Care Fraud, Implicates Others

(More)

Public Affairs Office
Michael Drewniak, PAO

973-645-2888

NEWARK – A medical doctor with a practice in Elizabeth pleaded guilty today to engaging in a scheme to defraud insurance companies that provide no-fault medical benefits to motorists and implicated others who were indicted last month, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Irina Zelikson, 48, of Old Bridge, a licensed medical doctor specializing in osteopathic medicine, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Susan D. Wigenton to a one-count Information that charges her with conspiracy to commit health care fraud. A forfeiture count in the Information also requires Zelikson to forfeit approximately \$14,200 to the United States. She was released on a \$100,000 bond. Sentencing is scheduled for July 7.

At her hearing, Zelikson told Judge Wigenton that between February 2004 and June 2005, she operated a medical practice in Elizabeth that treated individuals reportedly involved in motor vehicle collisions. Zelikson told Judge Wigenton that Aleksandr Sirota, through his companies, TFS Management Services, Inc. and ADS Management Services, Inc., conducted all medical billing on behalf of her medical practice.

Zelikson admitted that she, Sirota and others conspired to defraud no-fault insurance companies by falsely billing them for medical treatments that had not been rendered to patients. Zelikson also admitted that she signed medical bills and other documents, knowing them to be false. She further acknowledged that she falsified medical records and instructed and coached patients to lie about their physical conditions.

In one instance, Zelikson admitted that she told a person she believed to be a patient to lie so that person could obtain a settlement from an insurance company. (That person was, in fact, an undercover cooperating witness assisting federal agents in the investigation of Zelikson and others identified below.)

On Feb. 21, an Indictment charging Aleksander Sirota, a/k/a “Alexander Sirota,” 37, of Freehold; Elizabeth DeGuzman, 47, of Elizabeth; and Grigory Sirota, a/k/a “Grisha Sirota,” 62, Brooklyn, N.Y. was unsealed, charging each with conspiracy to commit health care fraud, among other offenses. In addition, Jack Melman, a/k/a “Yaakov Melman,” 46, of East Brunswick, was charged with conspiracy to commit money laundering in that Indictment. This case is pending before Judge Wigenton.

As part of her plea agreement with the United States, Zelikson has agreed to pay restitution and forfeit approximately \$14,298 to the United States.

The charge carries a maximum statutory penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine or twice the aggregate loss to any victims or gain to the defendant.

In determining an actual sentence, Judge Wigenton will consult the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun, and Special Agents of the IRS, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge William P. Offord, with the investigation leading to today's plea.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Anthony Moscato of the U.S. Attorney Office's Strike Force unit, in Newark.

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Defense Attorney: William Strazza, Esq.