

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

San Diego, California

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For Immediate Release

Medical Supply Company Owner Pleads Guilty to Bilking Medicare

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - June 21, 2012

United States Attorney Laura E. Duffy announced that the owner of a San Diego medical supply store pleaded guilty today for her participation in a scheme that defrauded the Medicare trust fund of more than \$320,000.

As detailed during her guilty plea, Oddeth Afara was the owner and operator of Trinity Heart Medical Supply, a company that sold durable medical equipment like power wheelchairs and hospital beds. Afara pleaded guilty before U.S. Magistrate Judge Bernard Skomal to conspiring to commit health care fraud, admitting that she was paid more than \$320,000 by Medicare based upon false and fraudulent claims related to power wheelchairs. The plea is subject to final acceptance by United States District Judge Thomas J. Whelan.

According to her plea agreement, Afara purchased power wheelchair prescriptions for individuals who were covered by Medicare – despite knowing that the patients who received the power wheelchairs did not need the equipment, and could walk without any assistance. As stated during today’s court hearing, the prescriptions themselves were completely fraudulent. Twelve different physicians confirmed that the prescriptions contained forged signatures and faulty diagnoses for unnecessary power wheelchairs. Afara used these fraudulent prescriptions to submit false claims to Medicare seeking reimbursement. In total, Afara submitted claims for 82 Medicare beneficiaries who did not need the power wheelchairs. The scheme lasted for more than a year, beginning in April 2008, and continuing until June 2009.

Afara is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge Whelan on September 17, 2012 at 9:00 a.m. At sentencing, Afara faces a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison, a \$250,000 fine, and a mandatory order of restitution to repay the fraudulently obtained proceeds of her scheme.

DEFENDANT **CRIMINAL CASE NO. 12cr2442W**

Oddeth Afara

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

One Count - Conspiracy to Commit Health Care Fraud -Title 18, United States Code, Section 1349; Maximum penalties: 10 years in custody; \$250,000 fine; 3 years of supervised release; and mandatory restitution

INVESTIGATING AGENCIES

Federal Bureau of Investigation
Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General