

NEWS

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



Ralph J. Marra, Jr., Acting U.S. Attorney

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ROBERT KIRSCH and MAUREEN NAKLY FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
973-645-2846 and 2723, respectively March 25, 2009

Scotch Plains Cardiologist Admits Wife and Partners' Wives
Had No-Show Jobs at Practice to Claim Social Security Benefits

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Michael Drewniak, PAO

973-645-2888

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NEWARK – A cardiologist pleaded guilty today to a criminal conspiracy in which he and his physician partners put their spouses on their medical practice’s payroll to render them independently eligible for Social Security disability and retirement benefits, acting U.S. Attorney Ralph J. Marra, Jr. announced.

Dr. Ravindra Patel, 54, of Scotch Plains, served as a part-owner of Associates in Cardiology and Internal Medicine, a private medical practice in Old Bridge. He also served as a Clinical Assistant Professor at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey in Newark.

Patel pleaded guilty to conspiracy to make false statements for giving his wife annual salaries of approximately \$90,000 for a “no-show” job at Associates in Cardiology, in order to defraud the Social Security Administration for prospective benefits, according to Robert Kirsch and Maureen Nakly, the Assistant U.S. Attorneys who are handling the prosecution.

Judge Chesler set sentencing for July 7, and Dr. Patel was released on a \$100,000 unsecured bond.

At a hearing before U.S. District Judge Stanley R. Chesler, Patel admitted that from late 2002 through early 2007, he and several partners at Associates in Cardiology added their wives to the payroll, even though none of the spouses performed any work for the medical practice during that period. Patel admitted that he and his partners retained an individual identified as D.P., a Certified Public Accountant, who prepared the federal tax returns for Patel and his wife, as well as the medical practice.

As purported employees of Associates in Cardiology, with D.P.’s knowledge and assistance, Patel and the others included false and fraudulent W-2 Wage and Tax Statement forms for their spouses in their federal income tax returns, reflecting annual salaries of approximately \$90,000, which were submitted to the Social Security Administration, in order to satisfy eligibility requirements for future disability and retirement benefits. According to the plea agreement in the case, Patel acknowledged that the intended financial loss to the United States from the fraud was between \$200,000 and \$400,000.

The investigation is continuing.

The charge of conspiracy to make false statements carries a maximum statutory prison sentence of 10 years, as well as a statutory maximum fine of \$250,000, Kirsch and Nakly said.

In determining the actual sentence, Judge Chesler will consult the advisory U.S.

Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, a 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 and thus defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all the time imposed by the court.

Marra credited Special Agents of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Acting Special Agent in Charge Anna Coschignano; Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun in Newark; Special Agents of the Social Security Administration Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Edward Ryan; and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, under the direction of Postal Inspector in Charge David L. Collins, for the investigation leading to today's plea.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Robert Kirsch and Maureen Nakly of the Securities and Health Care Fraud Unit of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Newark.

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Robert Mintz, Esq., Newark.