



U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney

Eastern District of Pennsylvania

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May 3, 2010

MEDICAL EQUIPMENT SUPPLIER ARRESTED TODAY

Gregory Akarue was arrested today in Houston, Texas on an indictment¹ returned by a grand jury in Philadelphia in connection with a conspiracy to defraud Medicare by billing for hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of power wheelchairs and accessories that were never authorized by a physician and which were not medically necessary, announced United States Attorney Michael L. Levy. According to the indictment, in 2003 Akarue formed a business by the name of Helping Hand Health Services for the purpose of supplying medical equipment, including power wheelchairs and scooters, to Medicare beneficiaries.

The indictment alleges that Akarue and his co-conspirators paid kickbacks to individuals whom they recruited to obtain Medicare beneficiary information from senior citizens. Those who allegedly received the kickbacks were known as “bird dogs” or “runners” who were usually paid between \$25.00 and \$50.00 for each senior citizen that was recruited. It is alleged that, in order to bill Medicare for power wheelchairs, Akarue obtained the identification numbers of various doctors, known as a UPIN (Unique Physician Identification Number), and fraudulently included it on the claims submitted to Medicare, despite the fact that the physician had never seen the patient and had not authorized a power wheelchair for the patient, resulting in an approximate fraud loss to the government of \$290,424.

INFORMATION REGARDING THE DEFENDANT

NAME	ADDRESS	AGE OR YEAR OF BIRTH
Gregory Akarue	Houston, Texas	46

If convicted, the defendant faces a maximum possible sentence of 30 years imprisonment, 3 years of supervised release, a fine of \$750,000, mandatory restitution, and a \$300 special assessment.

¹An Indictment or Information is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

May 3, 2010

Page 2

The case was investigated by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Floyd J. Miller.

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