



Department of Justice

Acting United States Attorney Michael W. Reap
Eastern District of Missouri

June 17, 2009
For Immediate Release

LOCAL PODIATRIST SENTENCED FOR OBSTRUCTING A FEDERAL AUDIT & PAYS THE UNITED STATES \$425,000 IN CIVIL SETTLEMENT

St. Louis, MO: Dr. Bic Chau Stafford was sentenced to five months in prison and five months of home confinement for obstructing a federal audit when providing the Medicare program with a false backdated treatment record, Acting United States Attorney Michael W. Reap announced today. Dr. Stafford was also ordered pay a \$25,000 fine.

Dr. Stafford billed Medicare for numerous complex foot surgery procedures allegedly provided to 39 local Medicare beneficiaries when she was really providing these patients with only routine foot care, such as toe nail clipping. When she was audited by the Medicare program in 2007, Medicare denied her claims for reimbursement regarding these 39 beneficiaries and requested that she re-pay \$6,840 to the Medicare program for these non-covered services. Dr. Stafford challenged this overpayment determination. As part of her efforts to avoid paying the overpayment back to the Medicare program, Dr. Stafford created new treatment records for these 39 patients in May 2007, back-dating the records with dates from December 2004 using false and fraudulent treatment information, claiming that she had provided these patients with podiatric surgical procedures instead of routine foot care.

Dr. Bic Chau Stafford practiced at the Family Foot and Ankle Care Center ("FFA"), in Maryland Heights, MO as well as assorted assisted living facilities in St. Louis City and St. Louis County. She had been enrolled as a Medicare healthcare provider since 2004. As a Medicare provider, Dr. Stafford was aware that Medicare does not reimburse podiatrists for routine foot care provided unless the patient has a significant medical condition that has resulted in severe circulatory complications.

Dr. Stafford also executed a civil settlement agreement with the United States requiring her to pay the Medicare program \$425,000. The conduct resolved in the civil settlement agreement covered the time frame January 2003 through October 2008, and involved Dr. Stafford billing the Medicare program for complex podiatric surgical procedures, including matrixectomies and avulsions, when she, in reality, had only provided patients with routine foot care, such as trimming toenails and removing corns and callouses. In the civil settlement agreement, Stafford further agreed to a five year exclusion from participation in the Medicare and other federal programs, and her professional corporation FFA was permanently excluded.

Dr. Stafford, 59, St. Louis, MO, pleaded guilty in April to one felony count of obstruction of a federal audit. She appeared today for sentencing before United States District Judge Catherine D. Perry.

Reap commended the work on the case by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Office of Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.