

United States Department of Justice

For Immediate Release

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Central District of California

Final Six Defendants Found Guilty in Imposter Nurse Scheme That Defrauded Medi-Cal Out of \$4.6 Million

LOS ANGELES—A federal jury this afternoon convicted the last six defendants indicted in relation to a ring that defrauded Medi-Cal out of nearly \$4.6 million by using unlicensed individuals to provide in-home care to scores of disabled patients, many of them children with cerebral palsy or developmental disabilities.

The six defendants found guilty today are: Berly Schwartz, 53, of La Mirada; Dante David, 51 of Costa Mesa; Socorro Narciso, 39, of Sacramento; Orlee Lumiguid, 37, of Sacramento; Ruth Magracia, 53, of LaPuente; and Carlisele Le, 39, of Lakewood. Each of the six defendants was convicted of health care fraud and conspiracy to commit health care fraud, charges that cumulatively carry a statutory maximum sentence of 20 years in federal prison. David and Narciso were also convicted of aggravated identity theft, which carries a two-year mandatory minimum sentence. The six defendants will be sentenced by United States District Judge Gary A. Feess, who has not yet scheduled a sentencing hearing.

“Today’s convictions should send a strong message to anyone who intends to defraud the federally funded Medi-Cal Program,” said Glenn R. Ferry, Special Agent in Charge of the Los Angeles Regional Office of the Office of Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. “The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General will work closely with our law enforcement partners and continue the fight to protect the rights of the Medi-Cal patients as well as to prosecute individuals who intent to defraud the Medi-Cal program.”

The six defendants convicted today were among 42 defendants charged last year as part of Operation License Integrity, a three-year investigation conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General; the California Department of Justice, Bureau of Medi-Cal Fraud and Elder Abuse; and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The defendants all posed as licensed nurses as part of a scheme operated by their employer, Priscilla Villabroza, a registered nurse who ran a Santa Fe Springs-based company called Medicare Plus Home Health Providers. Villabroza pleaded guilty in federal court last year to five counts of health care fraud. Thirty-five other defendants including Evelyn Tisoy, who served as the accountant for Medicare Plus; Rosemarie Labasan, the company’s medical records manager; and 34 imposter nurses previously pleaded guilty to either health care fraud or conspiracy to commit health care fraud.

A key assistant to Villabroza—Susan Bendigo, an RN who ran a Medicare Plus subsidiary—was indicted last year and remains a fugitive who fled the United States during the investigation into her activities.