

Eli's Hospice Insider

Enforcement: Authorities Crack Down On Hospice Fraud

Nurse imposter causes \$2.3 million in false hospice claims.

Whistleblowers aren't the only source of investigations against hospices.

In Texas: A recent murder case involving hospice employees sounds like an episode of Law & Order. The administrator of **Comfort House Services** hospice in McAllen is facing charges of murdering an elderly man for his estate. **Monica Melissa Patterson** was arrested on capital murder charges.

Authorities claim she manipulated 96-year-old **Martin Knell** into changing his will to leave her a significant portion of his estate, then had him killed by undocumented immigrant and hospice handyman **Angel Maria Garza**, according to press reports. Knell's home care worker **Celestina Mascorro**, one of Patterson's employees, implicated Patterson and Garza in Knell's death. Garza was arrested on murder charges. Patterson's attorney says she will enter a not guilty plea, and points to possible collusion between Mascorro and Knell's son, who wants the will undone and to receive the sizeable estate, according to The Monitor newspaper. Comfort House issued a statement saying it's cooperating with authorities and continuing operations as usual.

In Florida: The **Florida Agency for Healthcare Administration** is conducting a fraud investigation into Beverly Hills-based **Hospice of Citrus and the Nature Coast**, and Medicaid funds to the facility are suspended during the investigation, reports WCJB TV20 News. While Medicaid reimbursement is suspended, patients are transferring to other hospices such as **Haven Hospice** in Gainesville, TV20 says.

In Dallas: Hospice-related fraud is not always the hospice's fault. A woman who stole the identity of an RN and worked at several Dallas-Fort Worth area hospices was sentenced to four years in prison and \$233,000 in restitution, the DOJ says. **Jada Necole Antoine** saw nearly 250 patients at eight different hospice companies from 2009 to 2012, including **Heart to Heart Hospice of Texas, Odyssey Healthcare, Community Hospice of Texas, Elysian Hospice, Hospice Pharmacy Solutions, New Century Hospice, Keystone Custom Care Hospice, and Silverado Senior Living Hospice**. Antoine plead guilty last December (see Eli's Hospice Insider, Vol. 8, No. 4). The hospices submitted about \$2.3 million in claims to Medicare for services purportedly performed by Antoine while she was impersonating the victim RN, the **FBI** said when announcing the charges against Antoine. She received about \$107,000 in compensation from the hospices.