

Eli's Hospice Insider

Hospice News: Hospice Defendants Enter Guilty Pleas In Texas, Mississippi

In Dallas: Eleven defendants are on track for a trial next year in the notorious **Novus Health** case, following another guilty plea - this time from the hospice's Director of Nursing.

DON **Patricia Armstrong** is the fifth defendant to plead guilty in the case against Novus, in which the feds allege Novus CEO **Bradley Harris** directed hospice nurses to speed up the death of elderly patients by administering certain drugs (see Eli's Hospice Insider, Vol. 10, No. 4). Armstrong entered the plea Nov. 2, reports the Dallas Morning News.

Among other misdeeds, Armstrong admits to falsifying documentation, recruiting ineligible patients for bonuses, and being aware of patients' overmedication, the newspaper says. Armstrong is cooperating in the investigation.

The other 11 defendants in the case will face trial next year, unless more guilty pleas come in.

In Mississippi: **Charline Brandon**, owner of Cleveland, Mississippi-based hospices **Haven Hospice, North Haven Hospice, Lion Hospice**, and **North Lion Hospice**, admitted to billing Medicare for medically unnecessary services and services never provided, as well as recruiting ineligible patients, as part of a \$13 million fraud scheme.

"This sham hospice provider exploited the most vulnerable in our society while stealing millions from our health care system," said **HHS Office of Inspector General** Special Agent in Charge **Derrick L. Jackson**. "This is one of the largest and most egregious hospice schemes I have seen in Mississippi. The OIG will continue to identify the individuals committing these crimes and prosecute them to the fullest extent of the law."