

Eli's Hospice Insider

Hospice News: Minnesota-Based Hospice Chain Pays \$18 Million To Settle Fraud Charges

Evercare Hospice and Palliative Care, now known as Optum Palliative and Hospice Care, will pay \$18 million to settle charges that it billed for patients who weren't terminally ill, the **Department of Justice** says in a release. Optum operates in 10 states, according to its website.

In the suit sparked by whistleblower filings, the DOJ said that Optum tried to maximize Medicare reimbursement without regard for patients' prognosis. From 2007 to 2012, the company engaged in practices "allegedly included discouraging doctors from recommending that ineligible patients be discharged from hospice and failing to ensure that nurses accurately and completely documented patients' conditions in the medical records," the release says.

"It is ... critically important that we hold accountable those hospice providers that bill for medically unnecessary services in order to get higher reimbursements from the Medicare program," head of the Justice Department's Civil Division **Benjamin C. Mizer** says in the release.