

Eli's Hospice Insider

Hospice News: Novus CEO Draws 13-Year Prison Sentence

Cooperative CEO gets same sentence as hostile physician.

More proof that hospice fraud is in the national spotlight - a big-time prison sentence in a high-profile hospice case.

Six years after federal raids and five years after multiple Novus and Optimum Health Services hospice personnel were indicted, the Frisco, Texas hospice's CEO has been sentenced to 13 years and three months in prison and ordered to pay \$27.6 million in restitution, says the Department of Justice in a release. **Bradley J. Harris** pleaded guilty to a myriad of charges last March.



Among other misdeeds, Harris admitted that from 2012 to 2016, he billed Medicare and Medicaid for hospice services that were not provided, that were not directed by a medical professional, or that were provided to ineligible patients; that he used blank, pre-signed controlled substance prescriptions to dole out Schedule II drugs without physician input; that he paid \$150 per certification to physicians to falsely certify patients for hospice without examining them; and that he paid Express Medical for Medicare beneficiary information for recruitment purposes, the DOJ notes.

Harris did not plead guilty to some of the more salacious charges first named in the search warrant affidavit and the original indictment - namely, that Harris had staff intentionally overdose patients to hasten their death for financial gain under the per-beneficiary hospice cap; and that he texted with a nurse about that practice (see Eli's Hospice Insider, Vol. 10, No. 4).

Ten of Harris' codefendants, including physician **Charles Leach**, also pleaded guilty. Three more, including physicians **Mark Gibbs** and **Laila Hirjee**, were found guilty at trial. Gibbs received a 13-year sentence and \$28.0 million in restitution; Hirjee drew a 10-year sentence and \$16.3 million in restitution, and Leach received more than five years in prison and \$10.1 million in restitution, the DOJ says.