

Health Information Compliance Alert

Health Information News: Catch Him If You Can! Phony Doc

A 70-year-old man currently serving a 12-year sentence on his fourth conviction for impersonating a physician pleaded guilty Sept. 17 to yet again posing as a doctor and writing fraudulent prescriptions.

Gerald Barnes pleaded guilty to mail fraud, identity theft, distribution of controlled substances, and use of a DEA registration issued to another, according to a Department of Justice press release.

Barnes was born Gerald Barnbaum but legally changed his name in 1970 to Gerald Barnes; the latter is a licensed physician practicing in Stockton, California. The phony Barnes obtained copies of Dr. Barnes' school records and medical credentials, which the former used to obtain employment at several medical clinics and offices in Southern California.

In 1981 Barnes pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter for the death of a 29-year-old patient who died of complications from diabetes after Barnes misdiagnosed the patient. He was convicted again in 1984 and 1989 on state charges of grand theft and writing fraudulent prescriptions. After each release from prison, Barnes resumed his impersonation of Dr. Barnes, according to U.S. Attorney **Debra Yang**.

Barnes pleaded guilty in 1996 to federal charges related to his ongoing impersonation of a physician. Before his arrest Barnes had been employed as the medical director of **Executive Health Group**, a clinic in Los Angeles with clients that include the **Federal Reserve Bank**, the **Federal Bureau of Investigation**, among others.

In August 2000 Barnes escaped from federal custody during his transfer from a prison in Taft, CA to one in Marion, IL. He immediately returned to L.A., assumed the identity of Dr. Barnes, and began work as a physician with another clinic. Working as a physician, he earned a salary of \$10,000 per month until U.S. marshals arrested him Sept. 27, 2000.

Barnes pleaded guilty to impersonating Dr. Barnes to secure and maintain employment at **Family Medical Center**, where he examined, treated and wrote prescriptions for patients for controlled substances. He also admitted using Dr. Barnes' Social Security number and credit rating to purchase merchandise that included a new car.