



U.S. Department of Justice

Ronald C. Machen Jr.
*United States Attorney for the
District of Columbia*
Judiciary Center
555 Fourth St. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

PRESS RELEASE

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For Information Contact:

Public Affairs

(202) 252-6933

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Maryland Man Sentenced to 19 Months in Prison for Medicaid Fraud Involving Power Wheelchairs and Incontinence Supplies -Emerald Medical Services Submitted More Than \$600,000 in False Claims-

WASHINGTON – Uche Ben Odunzeh, 32, of Laurel, Md., was sentenced today to 19 months in prison on a federal charge stemming from the submission of more than \$600,000 in false health care claims, announced U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr.

Joining in the announcement were Debra Evans Smith, Acting Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Washington Field Office, Nicholas DiGiulio, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General (HHS - OIG) for the region including the District of Columbia, and Charles J. Willoughby, District of Columbia Inspector General.

Odunzeh pled guilty in October 2012 in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia to one count of conspiracy to commit health care fraud. As part of his plea agreement, Odunzeh agreed to pay \$277,383 in restitution to the District of Columbia. He also agreed to entry of a consent order of forfeiture requiring him to forfeit the proceeds of the fraud. He was sentenced by the Honorable Ellen S. Huvelle.

According to a statement of offense signed by the defendant as well as the government, Odunzeh is a Nigerian national whose visa expired in 2004. He was the sole owner of Emerald Medical Services, LLC, based in the District of Columbia. Emerald Medical sold durable medical equipment, or DME, such as power wheelchairs and adult incontinence supplies.

From on or about Jan. 8, 2008, through on or about March 18, 2011, Emerald Medical submitted 100 claims to the District of Columbia's Medicaid program for power wheelchairs, totaling \$591,653. The D.C. Medicaid program paid Emerald approximately \$480,272 for those claims. All of those claims were for the most expensive power wheelchair, referred to by its procedural billing code of K0011. In fact, however, Emerald Medical provided only more basic,

less expensive wheelchairs. The D.C. Medicaid program paid Emerald Medical approximately \$6,157 per K0011 chair – nearly twice as much as it would have paid for the less sophisticated chairs that Emerald Medical actually provided. Odunzeh admitted that the program paid Emerald Medical at least \$232,470 more than what the company might otherwise have been entitled to receive.

During the same period, Emerald Medical also submitted numerous claims to the D.C. Medicaid program for DME items that it never provided to Medicaid recipients. For example, the D.C. Medicaid program paid Emerald Medical about \$44,913 for adult incontinence supplies such as diapers, disposable underpads and gloves that were never actually provided.

Acting on an anonymous tip that he was leaving the country, federal agents arrested Odunzeh in July 2012 at Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport. A separate indictment was handed up and an arrest warrant has been issued for Odunzeh's alleged co-conspirator, Patricia Mubanga Chisanga, who is believed to have fled to Zambia, Africa.

In announcing the sentence, U.S. Attorney Machen, Acting Assistant Director in Charge Smith, Special Agent in Charge DiGiulio, and Inspector General Willoughby commended the efforts of those who investigated the case from the FBI's Washington Field Office, HHS-OIG, and the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit, D.C. Office of the Inspector General. They also acknowledged the efforts of Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Stuart Silverman, of the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit, as well as the U.S. Marshal's Service.

Finally, they commended those who worked on the case from the U.S. Attorney's Office, including Financial Analyst Bryan J. Snitselaar; Legal Assistant Nicole Wattelet; Assistant U.S. Attorney Zia M. Faruqui and former Assistant U.S. Attorney Emily Scruggs, who handled the asset forfeiture portion of the case; Assistant U.S. Attorney Lionel Andre, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Ted L. Radway, who is prosecuting the matter.

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