

Two women sentenced in multi-million-dollar medicare fraud scheme in 12 states including Massachusetts

A Colorado woman and a Houston woman were sentenced today in federal court in Boston for their roles in a multi-million-dollar Medicare fraud scheme.

Jessica Jones, 32, of Lakewood Colo., and Elizabeth Putulin, 31, of Houston, Texas were each sentenced by U.S. District Court Senior Judge George A. O'Toole, Jr. to three years of supervised release, the first year to be served in home detention. Judge O'Toole, Jr. also ordered Jones to pay restitution in the amount of \$8.6 million and ordered Putulin to pay restitution in the amount of \$20.7 million. Jones and Putulin are also barred from engaging in an occupation business in the health care industry. On Jan. 20, 2021, Jones and Putulin each pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit health care fraud.

Jones and Putulin conspired with Juan Camilo Perez Buitrago to submit more than \$107.6 million in false and fraudulent claims for durable medical equipment (DME) such as arm, back, knee and shoulder braces. Jones and Putulin helped Perez manufacture and submit false and fraudulent Medicare claims by establishing shell companies in more than a dozen different states, including Massachusetts. At Perez's request, Jones and Putulin purchased Medicare patient data from foreign and domestic call centers that targeted elderly patients and instructed call centers to contact the Medicare beneficiaries with an offer of ankle, arm, back, knee and/or shoulder braces "at little to no cost."

Perez then submitted Medicare claims for those patients without obtaining a prescriber's order to ensure that the braces were medically necessary. Jones and Putulin further facilitated the fraud by answering frequent phone calls from Medicare patients who received DME that they did not request, want or need. Additionally, Jones and Putulin responded to insurance companies' requests for prescriber's orders and medical records, which they were unable to provide.

United States Attorney Rachael S. Rollins; Johnnie Sharp Jr., Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Birmingham Field Division; Phillip M. Coyne, Special Agent in Charge of the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Inspector General, Boston Division; and Ketty Larco Ward, Inspector in Charge of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorney Elysa Q. Wan of Rollins' Health Care Fraud Unit prosecuted the case.