

Consultant Ron Halstead,DC, Indicted on Conspiracy and Health Care Fraud

Editorial Staff

Well-known chiropractic consultant Ron Halstead,DC, and three chiropractors have been named in a 30-count indictment filed in Clarksburg, West Virginia. All of the defendants, except the defendant/owner of the clinic, Robert Burns Jr.,DC, have been arraigned. A trial date has not been set, as Dr. Burns is in custody in Ireland awaiting an extradition hearing.

The indictment alleges that Dr. Burns, together with his two chiropractor associates, committed health care and insurance fraud by performing services under the name and authority of the clinic's medical doctor, who was not on premises when the services were rendered, and for billing medically unnecessary services.

Dr. Halstead was indicted for the advice he gave Dr. Burns in setting up the "MD/DC" clinic, and for counseling some of the allegedly illegal treatment and business practices.

The indictment seems to question the legitimacy of the MD/DC business model, and there are some indications that the government may be taking the position that the model itself is fraudulent.

Veteran health care litigator Richard Jaffe of Houston, Texas is defending Dr. Halstead.

"The indictment goes to the very heart of the MD/DC relationship," said Mr. Jaffe. "It is also the first time that a chiropractic consultant has been indicted for insurance fraud allegedly committed by his client, but it won't be the last such indictment, unless Halstead prevails," he predicted.

Mr. Jaffe promises a vigorous defense, and predicts that Dr. Halstead will be exonerated on all charges. Such a finding, he hopes, will discourage further prosecutions of MD/DC clinics and their consultants.

While this is not the first such case, nor the first time a chiropractic consultant has been named in an indictment involving an MD/DC clinic, the case is expected to subject the MD/DC model to further scrutiny and test the legitimacy of such arrangements. The outcome could have substantial consequences for doctors of chiropractic practicing under a version of this model.

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