

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Southern District of Texas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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More charges filed in fraud and kickback scheme

McALLEN, Texas - A 56-year-old woman has been taken into custody on charges related to a healthcare fraud and kickback scheme, announced Jennifer B. Lowery.

Nora Alaniz, South Padre Island, is set to make her initial appearance before U.S. Magistrate Judge J. Scott Hacker at 10 a.m. today. Previously charged was Dr. Tajul Shams Chowdhury, 72, McAllen. He will again appear on the charges in the superseding indictment in the near future.

The 16-count superseding indictment returned June 21 charges Alaniz and Chowdhury with conspiracy to pay and receive illegal kickbacks in exchange for the referral of prescriptions for compound drugs.

Alaniz is a registered nurse and the former owner of a home health care company located in Hidalgo County, according to the charges, while Chowdhury is a physician who also previously operated a medical clinic in Edinburg.

Alaniz allegedly received kickbacks disguised as employee salaries from a local pharmacy. In turn, she paid Chowdhury and employees of his medical clinic for the referrals.

The superseding indictment alleges Chowdhury wrote prescriptions and referred them to the pharmacy. As a result of the illegal kickback scheme, the pharmacy received more than \$300,000 from healthcare benefit programs such as Medicare and Medicaid from January to July 2017, according to the charges.

The indictment further alleges Alaniz received over \$70,000 in kickbacks.

Chowdhury and five others were originally charged July 15, 2021, for conspiracy to commit healthcare fraud, multiple counts of healthcare fraud, illegal kickback conspiracy and conspiracy to commit money laundering.

Four have already pleaded guilty in relation to the charges in the original indictment.

If convicted on the new charges, Chowdhury and Alaniz face up to five years in federal prison and a possible \$250,000 maximum fine.

U.S. Postal Service - Office of Inspector General (OIG), FBI, Defense Criminal Investigative Service, Department of Labor – OIG, Veterans Affairs - OIG, Texas Health and Human Services and the Department of Health and Human Services - OIG and Texas Department of Insurance conducted the investigation. The South Padre Island Police Department provided assistance with the arrest. Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrew Swartz is prosecuting the case.

***An indictment is a formal accusation of criminal conduct, not evidence.
A defendant is presumed innocent unless convicted through due process of law.***

Topic(s):
Health Care Fraud

Component(s):
USAO - Texas, Southern