

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Northern District of California

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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San Francisco Acupuncturist Sentenced To 12 Months In Prison For Health Care Fraud

SAN FRANCISCO – Haichao Huang was sentenced to 12 months in prison for committing health care fraud and making false statements relating to health care matters, announced United States Attorney David L. Anderson, Office of Personnel Management Office of the Inspector General Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Investigations Thomas W. South, and U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General Special Agent-in-Charge Quentin Heiden. The Honorable Susan Illston, United States District Judge, handed down the sentence.

Huang, 46, of San Francisco, Calif., pleaded guilty on December 6, 2019, to health care fraud and making false statement relating to health care matters.

According to the plea agreement, Huang was a health care provider who offered acupuncture, physical therapy, massage, and other services to patients in and around San Francisco, Calif. Beginning no later than February 2013 and continuing through at least June 2018, Huang knowingly and willfully executed a scheme to defraud healthcare benefit programs. Huang submitted and caused to be submitted false claims for reimbursement from health care benefit programs that he knew were not properly payable, including from programs provided through federal government and labor union healthcare plans. Huang included false and inaccurate billing codes that artificially inflated both the type of service the patient received and the time he spent with the patient. The plea agreement gives examples of the ways in which Huang submitted false and inaccurate billings for reimbursement. Huang submitted requests for reimbursement for acupuncture treatment when, in fact, the patient had received much shorter periods of treatment, no acupuncture treatment, or no care of any kind at all. Huang also submitted claims for services rendered on days when patients had not been seen by him at all—including days when Huang was not in California. Further, after a patient reached the limit of acupuncture sessions allowed by the relevant insurance program or plan, Huang falsely and inaccurately billed for other types of treatments and services that were not provided, or billed under a patient's family member's health plan who never received treatment through his practice, in order to continue receiving improper reimbursements.

In addition to the prison term, Judge Illston ordered Huang to serve two years of supervised release to begin after his prison term has concluded and to pay restitution of \$807,785.38 and a \$10,000 fine.

Huang had been released on a \$100,000 bond, which remains in place until he surrenders to begin serving his prison term on or before May 29, 2020.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Lina Peng and Ross Weingarten prosecuted the case with the assistance of Marina Ponomarchuk and Morgan Bryne. This prosecution is the result of investigations by the Office of Personnel Management Office of Inspector General and the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, with assistance from the San Mateo County District Attorney's Office-Bureau of Investigation.