

VETERANS HOME OF CALIFORNIA, YOUNTVILLE

Investigations of Improper Activities by State Employees, March 2002 Through July 2002

ALLEGATION I2000-876 (REPORT I2002-2),
NOVEMBER 2002

Department of Veterans Affairs' response as of August 2002¹

Investigative Highlight . . .

*The Veterans Home of
California, Yountville,
improperly billed Medicare
\$55,000 for visits that the
staff physician did not make.*

We investigated and substantiated that the information system used by the hospital at the Veterans Home of California, Yountville (home), for processing charges for services provided to the home's residents contains charges attributed to one doctor for services that the doctor could not have provided.

Finding: The home processed charges for services the doctor could not have provided.

The information system the home uses to bill Medicare, Medi-Cal, and other insurers showed that one doctor saw patients 2,614 times from July 1, 1999, through July 17, 2001, but we concluded that the doctor did not see a patient in 1,792 (69 percent) of those visits. Some of these excess visits in the system were for patients who were not on the doctor's clinic schedule for that day. In 400 other cases, the doctor was not working on the day in question, including weekends, holidays, and days that she was on vacation or sick leave. Furthermore, 148 incorrectly recorded visits were on 50 days on which the doctor worked from home. As further evidence of the information system's lack of credibility, it indicated that the doctor saw patients on every day of 35 consecutive days spanning August and September 1999, 34 consecutive days spanning June and July 2000, and 26 consecutive days spanning May and June 2001. In fact, the billing system indicated that the doctor saw patients on all but three of the 70 days from July 15

¹ Since we report the results of our investigative audits only twice a year, we may receive the status of an auditee's corrective action prior to a report being issued. However, the auditee should report to us monthly until its corrective action has been implemented. As of January 2003, this is the date of the auditee's latest response.

through September 22, 1999. As of January 22, 2002, the home had billed Medicare \$131,000 for 1,488 of these 2,614 patient visits. However, \$55,000 was for 887 visits that we concluded the doctor did not make.

Department Action: Pending.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (department) reports that it is actively working to upgrade its billing system and is working with its billing agent to resolve any charges billed and reimbursed incorrectly. Further, the department states that it will ensure that it obtains the signature of the attending physician/technician to maintain proper practices and Medicare compliance.