



Summer 2009



# Why do people steal from the health service?

There is no one reason why a dishonest minority try to defraud the NHS. Offenders vary – from patients falsely claiming entitlement to free prescriptions to staff gaining employment with false documentation or contractors falsifying records of NHS work to take more money than they are owed.

Fraud in the health service diverts resources from patient care. It costs the NHS many millions of pounds every year, affecting all of us, whether we work in the health service, receive treatment from it or support it with our taxes.

## What can the rest of us do about it?

NHS Counter Fraud works to raise awareness of the problem. We hope this will mean that people are less likely to tolerate it. We already have the support of the honest majority of staff and patients who, through peer pressure, make fraud unacceptable. This dramatically reduces the number of people prepared to attempt it.



Confidential reporting line

But we need to go further than this. As well as making the very idea of NHS fraud intolerable, we need people to report any concerns or suspicions they do have about fraud in the health service. Anyone can do this – from clinicians to contract cleaners, patients to security staff – by:

- calling the NHS Fraud and Corruption Reporting Line: **0800 028 40 60**
- contacting the NHS health body's Local Counter Fraud Specialist

## What happens when a report is received?

Of course, our primary aim is to prevent fraud from occurring in the first place. This is done in a variety of ways, directly and indirectly – from implementing fraud-proofing systems and procedures to using peer pressure and publicity.

When an indication or allegation of fraud does arise, it is professionally investigated. NHS Counter Fraud employs counter fraud specialists in its regional teams across England and Wales. High-value frauds and those that cross regional boundaries are investigated by its dedicated operational support team. NHS Counter Fraud also supports Local Counter Fraud Specialists (LCFSs) employed in health bodies.

The organisation has a Forensic Computing Unit, which recovers all types of digital evidence for use in criminal, civil and disciplinary proceedings.

All NHS counter fraud specialists conduct their investigations to ensure that the widest possible range of sanctions remains available. If the evidence gathered shows that fraud has occurred, it is used to prosecute the offender and recover the money defrauded so that it can be returned to the NHS.

It is not unusual for different types of proceeding to overlap: an employee who is being investigated or prosecuted may also be the subject of disciplinary proceedings by their employer.

## What happens if someone is found guilty of fraud?

NHS counter fraud specialists approach every investigation with 'parallel sanctions' in mind. This means considering from the outset how an appropriate combination of criminal, civil and disciplinary processes may be used to punish offenders.

NHS Counter Fraud will always seek financial redress. Local action can also be taken to recover money by using the administrative procedures of the NHS body or the civil law.

In cases of serious fraud, NHS Counter Fraud can apply to the courts to make a restraining or confiscation order.



Forensic Computing Unit



## How do we ensure good practice in the future?

NHS Counter Fraud requires every NHS organisation to provide evidence of its work to prevent fraud. Each year, it rates these counter fraud arrangements, publicising the results at [www.concordat.org.uk](http://www.concordat.org.uk).

Collecting information about local counter fraud work from all NHS health bodies in England and Wales is invaluable. We can share the good practice and innovation that comes from the high performers with all NHS organisations. It also gives us a greater insight into the counter fraud risks faced in the NHS. We pass this data on to the Audit Commission, which evaluates how well NHS organisations manage and use their financial resources, and to the Care Quality Commission, the independent regulator of health and social care in England.

## Types of NHS fraud



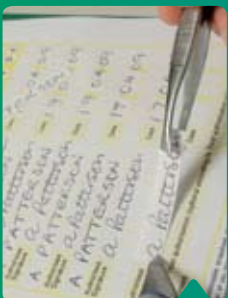
### PATIENTS

Patient fraud includes claiming for free or reduced cost treatment and services when not entitled, and using aliases to get prescriptions.



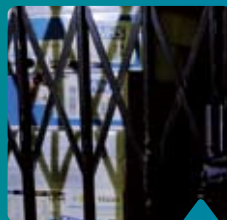
### PROFESSIONALS

Fraud by NHS professionals includes altering prescriptions, claiming for work not undertaken, creating 'ghost' patients and making fraudulent claims for out-of-hours visits.



### MANAGERS AND STAFF

Fraud by NHS managers and staff includes submitting false timesheets, creation of 'ghost' employees and fake invoices.



### CONTRACTORS AND SUPPLIERS

Contractor and supplier fraud includes submitting false invoices and making fraudulent claims.

# REPORT NHS FRAUD ON 0800 028 40 60

# ..... IN THE PRESS

## £250,000 PRESSURE CHAMBER FRAUD

Two men who ran a private decompression chamber designed to treat “the bends” in divers and their accomplice were sentenced today for conspiring to defraud the NHS of £250,000, at Plymouth Crown Court.

Concluding a major investigation by the NHS Counter Fraud Service and Devon and Cornwall Police, David Welsh was jailed for five years and three months. Michael Brass received two years and three months. Anthony Robert Walker received a two year suspended sentence.

Former boss of the Fort Bovisand Hyperbaric Diver Centre David Welsh, 51, of Plymstock, colluded with diving instructor Michael Brass, 45, of Liverpool and Walker to charge the NHS for very expensive emergency decompression treatments that never took place.

They used the identities of 37 people who had never been treated in their hyperbaric chamber to submit bogus invoices submitted to 12 health bodies between 1998 and 2002. Eight of the “patients” had never been diving –one could not even swim.

## GP PRACTICE MANAGER JAILED

A former Practice Manager was sentenced to two years imprisonment at Preston Crown Court yesterday after defrauding the NHS of up to £70,000.

Audrey Ellis ,52, formerly employed by St Mary's Surgery in Blackpool, stood trial in August charged with 17 counts of theft and 14 of false accounting. Financial irregularities discovered at the GP Practice sparked an investigation by the Trust's Local Counter Fraud Specialist and the NHS Counter Fraud Service (NHS CFS), with Lancashire Police. It revealed Ellis had issued inappropriate overtime payments to herself, had duplicated invoices and personally cashed business cheques.

## JAIL FOR MBE FRAUDSTER

Dr Hooman Ghalamkari MBE received a nine month jail sentence today at Worcester Crown Court (25th March) for false accounting, after an investigation by the NHS Counter Fraud Service (CFS uncovered theft of prescription charges belonging to the NHS, and the falsifying of documents used for accounting purposes.

Ghalamkari was charged with one count of theft and one of false accounting and the financial gain was approximately £21,000. Dr Ghalamkari dispensed the lower priced Simvastatin and then claimed payment for the more expensive Simvador and pocketed the difference. He also withheld NHS prescription charges and falsified prescriptions to enable him to keep cash that belonging to the NHS.

## TWO HOSPITAL MANAGERS SENTENCED FOR CV FRAUD IN A WEEK

HR manager Attah Okoji was today handed a six-month suspended jail sentence at Newcastle Crown Court for lying about his criminal convictions to an agency to get a job in England's largest mental health trust –Northumberland, Tyne and Wear Trust.

On 6th January 2009 Lee Joseph Whitehead, former director of planning at NHS Stoke on Trent, was sentenced to 12 weeks in custody for adding psychology qualifications to his cv.

Both men were investigated by the NHS Counter

Fraud Service (NHS CFS). Okoji, 41, of Gateshead, was charged with one count of fraud after a joint investigation by NHS CFS and Northumbria Police. He previously served 6 months in prison for stealing £16,000 when working as an NHS finance officer, and was convicted in 2004 for failing to declare his convictions - to get a job with a Leeds health body.

Imprisoned on Tuesday, Lee Joseph Whitehead, 44, from Buckinghamshire, had added a string of bogus psychology qualifications to his BSc in Psychology.