

Whistleblowers' Lawsuit Leads to Massive Medical Fraud Settlement

What started seven years ago as a whistleblower lawsuit filed by two Charlotte-area doctors ended Tuesday with two emergency room physicians groups paying federal and state governments more than \$33 million to avoid going to court, according to a **report** by *The Charlotte Observer*.

"The payments cap off longstanding allegations of a vast medical-fraud conspiracy between a major hospital chain and the physicians groups that bilked federal and state healthcare programs in North Carolina and five other states out of millions of dollars," writes Michael Gordon.

He explains that prosecutors allege that EmCare physicians took kickbacks and other inducements from Health Management Associates, a now defunct chain of acute-care hospitals, to recommend that their patients be admitted to HMA hospitals rather than receive outpatient care. Then the doctors would order expensive and unnecessary tests, resulting in Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements to the hospitals.

Read the *Observer* article.