

# Home health care...

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said Theresa Dudley, director of Medicare Plus Home Health.

The 44-people indicted were from Santa Fe Springs-based Medicare Plus Home Health Providers. Authorities arrested 20 people connected to the medical fraud ring last week. According to the DOJ, the Santa Fe Springs based Medicare Plus Home Health Providers sent unlicensed and unqualified individuals, many of who were not even US citizens, to provide nursing services to sick and disabled children across Los Angeles. The agency would pay the unlicensed individual \$8 to \$12 but would bill the state up to \$35 an hour, per nurse. A DOJ spokesman said that 80 percent of those indicted are Filipino.

The admitted organizer of the ring, Priscilla Villabroza, a registered nurse, pleaded guilty in federal court last year to five counts of health care fraud. She faces up to 50-years in federal prison.

A woman who answered the phone at the Santa Fe Springs-based Medicare Plus Home Health Providers declined to comment on the indictment.

**Mistaken identity**  
But the case of mistaken identity has already taken its toll on the Pasadena-based family company Medicare Plus Home Health. According to Dudley, they've already lost potential clients because of what happened last week and patients and doctors have asked about the quality of their nurses.

The two nursing agencies not only share similar names but they are also in the same business, a business Dudley says will now be more scrutinized by the government as a result from the fall out of the scam.

"Consequently, it's going to impact all agencies and health care in general because it's like we're going to pay for the sins of our brethren in that there's going to be stricter regulations [and] it's already overregulated," she said.

**Filipino nurses**  
Aside from the home health agencies, Filipino nurses are also feeling the effects from the indictment.

Filipinos are usually looked upon as good and reliable nurses. However, last week's indictment may have changed that.

Registered Nurse Bert Jaurigue said that the arrest and

indictment of so many Filipinos last week is an embarrassment to the nursing and Filipino community.

Jaurigue said that it's common knowledge in the industry that some Filipinos start up home health agencies to scam the government.

"Quick money," he said. "Most of them are aware it takes about two years before the government can catch up on them. Most of the time, [in] two years, they are already out of the coun-

try."  
Jaurigue adds that the only thing good that came out of the arrest last week was that, thankfully, none of the children patients were killed.

"What they did was very dangerous," he said. "These kids could have been killed."

"I really can't believe this person who owned this place," he added. "She did it because her purpose was to make a lot of money. She probably thought she would never get caught but sooner or later they'll catch up on you." (Joseph Pimentel/AP-Press)

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Attorney Gali Koren is the firm's founder and managing attorney. She received her Juris Doctor Degree, Magna Cum Laude, from Western State University. She obtained her LL.M. in International Law from the University of San Diego Law School, majoring in Immigration Law. Ms. Koren is a member of the State Bar of California and is authorized to represent clients on immigration matters in all 50 states.

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