

Victim: The Healthcare Industry

I am Carol Plato. I am from Martin County (Florida), and I am Director of Corporate Business Services for Martin Memorial Medical Center. I have a couple brief stories to tell you about. In 2001 we had a Guatemalan, an illegal patient, in our hospital. He was there from 2001 until 2003. He had over \$1.5 million in healthcare services. We forcibly returned him to his home country of Guatemala at our own cost of \$30,000. You ask why am I telling you about a case that happened in 2003? Because today that case is not over; we have spent and are spending up to a quarter of a million dollars in legal fees, because his family here in the United States is suing us because they think it was inappropriate for us, to return this illegal patient to his home country.

Currently, as of today, I have a patient from Mexico who has been in my hospital for 760 days. He has severe brain damage; he has no family, no friends. His charges, to date, for almost 2 years is \$1.5 million, and we have contacted the Mexican Consulate four times; we have contacted Immigration, and nobody will help us return this patient to Mexico. We are even willing to spend our own \$30,000 to return this patient. We can't get anyone to help us with that.

In 2007 the Florida Hospital Association estimated that there was 100 million dollars in

costs for illegal patient care. One of the major problems that healthcare institutions have today, that you need to be aware of, is ongoing care. If somebody comes into our emergency room, we don't turn them away. But if somebody comes into our emergency room and they have renal failure, and they require dialysis -- well, right now I have six patients (illegal, undocumented patients) that we are seeing every 3 days for renal dialysis. For all of this that I've talked to you about, we have received no reimbursement. This obviously affects all of us; our healthcare costs are severely affected by this.

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