

Office of Attorney General Terry Goddard



STATE OF ARIZONA
DEPARTMENT OF LAW
1275 W. WASHINGTON STREET
PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007-2926
WWW.AZAG.GOV

ANNE TITUS HILBY
PRESS SECRETARY
PHONE: (602) 542-8019
CELL PHONE: (602) 725-2200
ANNE.HILBY@AZAG.GOV

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Terry Goddard Stops Doctor, Con Artist Who Defrauded AHCCCS of \$70,000

(Phoenix, Ariz. – Jan. 26, 2009) Attorney General Terry Goddard today announced that Olena Kulakova, 30, of Glendale, and Dr. Paul Balikian, 77, of Phoenix, have been indicted on charges relating to a scheme that allegedly defrauded the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) of at least \$70,000.

According to investigators, in May 2006, Balidian, a licensed medical doctor, sold the "We Care Clinic," a medical clinic in Phoenix, to Kulakova, who is not a licensed physician. Between May 2006 and September 2007, Kulakova allegedly owned and operated the clinic and represented herself as a physician, including examining and treating patients, writing prescriptions using Balikian's name, signing off on medical bills and patient charts and generally practicing medicine.

During this same time period, Balidian allegedly continued to work as a doctor at the clinic. Court documents state that he signed-off on the charts of patients seen by Kulakova, despite knowing that Kulakova was not licensed to practice medicine.

"This scheme shows a blatant disregard for the well-being of patients," Goddard said. "Protecting Arizona and its residents from fraud and financial abuse is one of my top priorities, especially during these tough economic times."

The following is a summary of the charges in the indictment:

- **Olena Kulakova:** Kulakova was indicted on 92 counts including conspiracy, fraud, theft, illegally conducting an enterprise, participating in a criminal syndicate, money laundering, forgery and illegal administration of narcotic and dangerous drugs. If convicted of all charges, Kulakova faces up to 25 years in prison.
- **Dr. Paul Balikian:** Balikian was indicted on six counts, including conspiracy, fraud, theft, illegally conducting an enterprise, assisting a criminal syndicate and money laundering. If convicted of all charges, Balikian faces up to 12.5 years in prison.

These charges, all felonies, are the result of an investigation conducted by the Attorney General's AHCCCS/Medicaid Fraud Control Unit and the DEA. Assistant Attorney General Philip Garrow is prosecuting this case. A copy of the indictment is attached. For more information, contact Anne Hilby at (602) 542-8019.

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