



COUNTY OF FRESNO

Lisa A. Smittcamp
District Attorney

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 7, 2019

HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS CHARGED WITH INSURANCE FRAUD

Psychologist and doctor charged for alleged fraudulent billing of insurance companies

FRESNO, Calif. — Psychologist Danita Stewart, 51, of Chatsworth, and doctor, Catalino Dureza, 54, of La Quinta, have been charged for allegedly submitting fraudulent insurance claims for Medical Legal Evaluations in an attempt to steal tens of thousands from multiple insurers.

Danita Stewart, a licensed psychologist, allegedly submitted 36 fraudulent insurance claims between April 2015 and June 2015 to five different insurers for Medical Legal Evaluations for a total of \$90,714. Even though Stewart was a licensed psychologist she has never been certified as a Qualified Medical Examiner as required by law to conduct and bill for Medical Legal Evaluations. These fraudulent evaluations were conducted at clinics in Fresno, Tulare, and Kern Counties.

Catalino Dureza, a licensed medical doctor, had obtained the proper certification to conduct and bill for Medical Legal Evaluations, but his certification lapsed between November 2011 and December 2014. During that time, Dureza allegedly continued to conduct and bill for Medical Legal Evaluations and once he was recertified he conducted and billed for unauthorized Medical Legal Evaluations. Between January 2014 and May 2015, Dureza allegedly submitted 17 fraudulent insurance claims for Medical Legal Evaluations conducted in Fresno County to five different insurers for a total of \$16,292.

These cases were investigated by the Central Valley Workers' Compensation Task Force, an anti-fraud partnership which includes the California Department of Insurance, the Fresno County District Attorney's Office, the Tulare County District Attorney's Office, the Kern County District Attorney's Office, the Kings County District Attorney's Office, the Madera County District Attorney's Office, the Merced County District Attorney's Office, the Employment Development Department, and the Franchise Tax Board.

These cases are being prosecuted by the Fresno County District Attorney's Office. Stewart and Dureza posted bond on May 6, 2019. Stewart's arraignment is set for May 10, 2019. Dureza's arraignment is set for May 20, 2019.

Danita Stewart was charged with 36 felony counts of Penal Code 550(a)(1) and 1 count of Penal Code Section 550(a)(7). Catalino Dureza was charged with 17 felony counts of Insurance Code 1871.4(a)(1).

The Media may e-mail FCDAMedia@fresnocountyca.gov or contact Administrative Assistant Leslie Gillespie at (559) 600-4442 with questions.