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Doctor settles billing case

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Staff Writer

A doctor who recently left Rutland has agreed to pay \$35,000 to settle a Medicare billing dispute, the U.S. Attorney's Office said Monday.

Dr. Mark Jay Bucksbaum settled with the federal government to "resolve his potential civil liability" for what Assistant U.S. Attorney Kevin Doyle described as inappropriate billing practices. Doyle also stressed that there were no claims that Bucksbaum's patients were endangered.

"It wasn't an issue of billing for things that were never performed," Doyle said. "The procedures performed for which he was billing weren't necessarily appropriate."

At issues, Doyle said, were "trigger point injections," which Doyle said are a form of pain relief for knotted muscles. Some doctors inject a substance, but Doyle said Bucksbaum was using a procedure called "dry needling" in which the needle is inserted into the muscle without actually injecting anything.

To bill Medicare, Doyle said, doctors need to make an actual injection.

"There is a claim code for trigger point injections," Doyle said. "The only code for Medicare that would cover something like dry-needling would be an acupuncture code. Acupuncture is a noncovered procedure federally."

The U.S. Attorney's Office said Bucksbaum billed for the procedure between 2003 and 2009. The settlement was out of court, and Doyle said it would not affect Bucksbaum's license to practice medicine.

State officials said Bucksbaum left Vermont in July for what were described at the time as personal reasons. Doyle said he did not know Bucksbaum's current whereabouts or if the dispute had anything to do with his relocation.

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