

Napa doctor settles Medicare fraud case

[Jennifer Huffman](#)

Business Editor

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A Napa doctor has agreed to pay the U.S. government \$400,000 to settle allegations that he filed false claims for Medicare reimbursement, acting U.S. Attorney Brian Stretch announced in San Francisco on Tuesday.

The agreement with Ali Vaziri, M.D., a gastroenterologist, settles the allegations without the need for a civil lawsuit by the government.

It provides that Vaziri, while agreeing to pay the \$400,000, does not admit to any liability.

Federal attorneys said that between 2007 and 2011, Vaziri billed Medicare for patient office visits that were longer and included more services than the consultations he actually provided.

He was also alleged to have billed separately for office visits that were required to be billed together with colonoscopies.

Stretch said the investigation was carried out jointly by the U.S. Attorney's Office for Northern California, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Internal Revenue Service and the FBI.

Vaziri has faced a number of legal challenges in recent years.

In June 2015, the Medical Board of California placed Vaziri on seven years' probation and prohibited him from supervising physician assistants because of a criminal conviction for tax fraud.

In June 2014, Vaziri was sentenced to a year and a day in federal prison for tax fraud after cheating the IRS of more than \$116,700, according to federal prosecutors.

Vaziri, who was indicted in 2012, served his sentence at a federal facility in Lompoc, said his attorney, Malcolm Segal of Sacramento, in a 2015 interview.

"Dr. Vaziri will

Dr. Vaziri will be fully permitted to practice medicine. Any restrictions will not impede his ability to practice," said Segal at the time.

The physician was sentenced under a plea agreement reached in early 2014, when he agreed to plead guilty to four counts of filing false income tax returns between 2005 and 2008. The charges were filed in connection with income and expenses from his medical practice.

In exchange for his guilty plea, entered in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, federal officials dropped health care fraud allegations.

By June 2014, Vaziri had already paid the IRS the \$110,700 that was due, plus penalties and interest — a total of more than \$151,861, according to the court filing.

Segal could not be reached on Wednesday for a comment on the most recent settlement