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Crime Blog

Frisco hospice owner urged nurses to overdose patients so they would die quicker, FBI says



Jamie Knodel

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BY SCOTT GORDON
KXAS-TV (NBC5)

The owner of a Frisco medical company regularly directed nurses to overdose hospice patients with drugs such as morphine to speed up their deaths and maximize profits and sent text messages like, “You need to make this patient go bye-bye,” an FBI agent wrote in an affidavit [for a search warrant obtained by NBC 5](#).

The executive, Brad Harris, founded the company, Novus Health Care Services, Inc., in July 2012, according to state records.

Novus’ office is on Dallas Parkway in Frisco.

No charges have been filed against Novus or Harris. Harris, 34, did



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Criminal justice reporters, editors and invited guests provide news and analysis impacting Dallas-area police, courts, fire and other public safety issues and entities. Readers

not return messages left with a receptionist and at his Frisco home.

Harris, an accountant, told a nurse to overdose three patients and directed another employee to increase a patient's medication to four times the maximum allowed, the FBI said.

In the first case, the employee refused to follow the alleged instructions, the agent wrote in the affidavit. The document does not say whether the other three patients were actually harmed.

Harris also told other health care executives over a lunch meeting that he wanted to “find patients who would die within 24 hours,” and made comments like, “if this f— would just die,” an FBI agent wrote in the warrant.

An FBI spokeswoman declined to comment on the investigation.

Novus' website says the company offers hospice and home healthcare services.

“We have a saying at Novus, be fast and treat people the way we would want to be treated,” the website says. “This encourages us to go the extra mile to make patients feel comfortable and secure about their special needs and requests.”

'Aggregator cap'

Healthcare providers do not necessarily make more money for longer hospice stays.

are encouraged to join the conversation.



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That's because hospices are subject to an "aggregator cap," which limits Medicare and Medicaid payments based on the yearly average hospice stay, the FBI said.

If patients live too long, the provider can be forced to pay back part of their payments to the government.

"Hence, hospice providers have an incentive to enroll patients whose hospice stays will be short relative to the cap," an agent wrote in the affidavit.

The investigation

The FBI said its investigation into Novus started in October 2014 and initially focused on allegations that for the previous two years, the company recruited patients "who did not qualify for services" and charged the government for services that were not medically necessary.

The investigation revealed that "as part of this scheme, Harris, who has no medical training or licenses, would direct his employed nurses to overdose hospice patients with palliative medications such as morphine to hasten death, and thereby minimize Novus' (paybacks) under the cap."

The search, for emails and other electronic documents, was executed in early February but the paperwork was obtained Tuesday by NBC 5.

The warrant refers to an FBI raid of Novus' offices in September

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Brad Harris (inset) founded and owns Novus Health Care Services, Inc., according to state records. (KXAS-TV)

2015 but court records related to that search could not be found and appear to be under seal.

The FBI said investigators had interviewed several Novus employees.

One worker said Harris himself decided which home health care patients would be moved to hospice.

“He did this by having employees who were not doctors sign the certifications with the names of doctors also employed by Novus,” the agent said. “If a patient was on hospice care for too long, Harris would direct the patient be moved back to home health, irrespective of whether the patient needed continued hospice care.”

In a lunch meeting, the FBI said Harris asked two health care executives to “find patients who would die within 24 hours” because that would “save my ass toward the cap.”

Speaking of one of his patients, Harris said “words to the effect of, ‘If this f— would just die.’”

Another Novus employee told agents that in late 2013, Harris sent a text message asking the worker to “administer an overdose of medication to a hospice patient ... by increasing the patient’s



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medication dosage to approximately four times the maximum allowed.”

The employee did not comply with the request because it would have killed the patient, the FBI said.

One worker said Harris regularly directed nurses to “overdose hospice patients when they have been on hospice service for too long” by sending text messages like, “You need to make this patient go bye-bye,” the FBI said.

Search warrant

The search warrant required that a data storage company that Novus had hired, Smarsh of Portland, Oregon, turn over all of Novus’ emails and medical records.

The company turned over the information the same day, according to court records.

In the warrant, signed Feb. 3, the FBI said it was investigating health care fraud, false statements relating to health care matters, and obstruction of a criminal investigation into health care offenses.

The FBI said it searched Novus’ offices on Sept. 17, 2015 and seized 18 DVD’s of the company’s emails. Another 44 were subpoenaed from the attorney of a former unnamed executive.

Agents needed a password to read the emails, according to the records. Smarsh turned over the password along with a hard drive

and account and search histories, records showed.

Smarsh, which is not accused of any wrongdoing, did not respond to a request for comment.

An FBI agent investigating the case said he was working with investigators from the Department of Health and Human Services' Inspector General's office.

HHS administers the Medicare program, which provides health benefits for people 65 and older.

Medicaid, which is funded mostly by federal tax dollars and administered by the state of Texas, provides health care for poor people.



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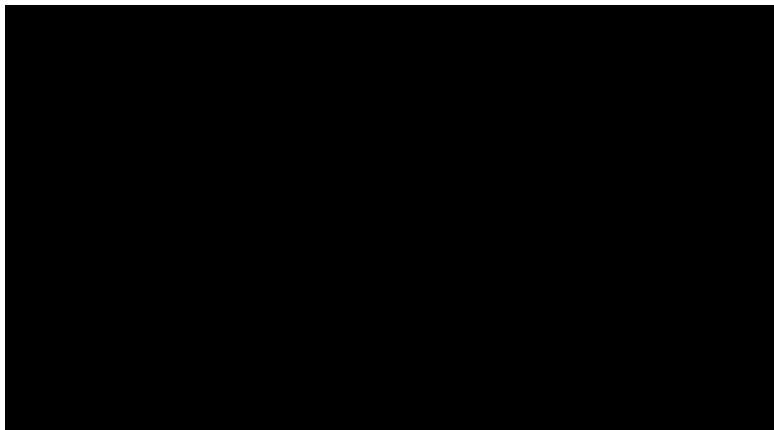


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 **lindawn1993** @lindawn1993 from Twitter 15m


@JeffreyGuterman \U0001f621\U0001f621\U0001f621\U0001f621I Use to work with terminally ill elderly. That is horrible what is done.
 \U0001f64f\U0001f3fb\U0001f64f\U0001f3fb\U0001f64f\U0001f3fb\U0001f64f\U0001f3fb\U0001f64f\U0001f3fb\U0001f64f\U0001f3fb

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@JeffreyGuterman who is wrong here.

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 **LAH** 27 minutes ago


WOW.

Like Reply

 **Scottie713Smith** @Scottie713Smith from Twitter 40m

@dallasnews the nurses are just as responsible as he is

Like Reply

 **texguy** 27 minutes ago

@Scottie713Smith @dallasnews If they did as he directed, if not, then they are not.

[Like](#) [Reply](#)**juliettorrez** @juliettorrez from Twitter[42m](#)

@dallasnews @NBCDFW let's hope the company wasn't running hospice centers in Northern New Mexico.

[Like](#) [Reply](#)**50king**[52 minutes ago](#)

In brads on words he needs to go Bye-Bye

[1](#) [Like](#) [Reply](#)**FranklinCole3**[1 hour ago](#)

Nail Harris for multiple premeditated murders and prosecute Novus for complicity.

[Like](#) [Reply](#)**MaxMacke**[1 hour ago](#)

You can say what you want, but a slow drawn out death of cancer, is not something I would want, most people by the time you are on Hospice, you are ready to go.

[1](#) [Like](#) [Reply](#)**1DaIM**[1 hour ago](#)

@MaxMacke That's not the director's call.

[Like](#) [Reply](#)**Annag0327**[40 minutes ago](#)

@MaxMacke Except you know nothing of these patients or what was wrong with them. You should make your own healthcare decisions based on discussions between you & your doctor. Do you want someone other than you or your doctor making your healthcare decisions?

[Like](#) [Reply](#)**MaxMacke**[23 minutes ago](#)

@Annag0327 @MaxMacke by the time you are on Hospice, those decisions have been made for you, that is what Hospice is therefore, to ease your pain in the last few weeks before death

[Like](#) [Reply](#)**Icdrrek**[1 hour ago](#)



The headline on this article says virtually nothing. Perhaps the owner "urged" nurses to overdose patients. There is nothing in the article that says that any nurses actually followed the "urging" of the owner. It seems that the FBI is investigating. Perhaps we should allow the investigation to conclude before we "jump to conclusions."

There are very strict criteria for admission to hospice care. If the agency was not following those criteria and then were billing for that care then there seems to be fraud which is what the FBI will find.

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Let's hold on til the investigation is complete before we tar and feather this company.

1 Like Reply



Roberto99

2 hours ago

Some sick people out there. Hopefully this guy and the nurses giving the overdoses get what they have coming to them.

1 Like Reply



Icdrrek

1 hour ago

@Roberto99 There is nothing in the article that says any nurses actually gave overdoses to patients. Let's wait til the investigation is concluded.

3 Like Reply



SixPack

1 hour ago

@Icdrrek @Roberto99 Do you work for these guys. You sound almost frantic.

Like Reply



ShelbyKaufman

2 hours ago

A Pike (frat idiot) at UT Austin. Nice.

Like Reply



Tom Lemons

2 hours ago

@ShelbyKaufman And this is relevant because...

1 Like Reply



Tom Field

2 hours ago

Why isn't this guy under arrest for attempted murder?

2 Like Reply



Robert_W_Dora

1 hour ago

@TomField Because....Texas.

1 Like Reply



BluTygyr @BluTygyr from Twitter

3h

@BluTygyr Every hospital is different, but I know personally that there are MANY places where nurses and doctors use strategies to same end.

2 Like Reply



BluTygyr @BluTygyr from Twitter

2h

@BluTygyr Yes "Hospitals" not hospice. Care altered/denied because "at Xyo what enjoyment do they have out of life anyway?" Not Your Call!

Like Reply



Icdrrek

1 hour ago

@BluTygyr @BluTygyr If you are aware of hospitals that are using these "strategies" then it is incumbent upon you to report them to the authorities.

2 Like Reply



1DaIM

1 hour ago

@BluTygyr @BluTygyr You know of instances of attempted murder at "MANY places" and you aren't reporting this to the police?

1 Like Reply



carolannwomack

3 hours ago

Love of money is the root of all evil.

4 Like Reply

NickG

3 hours ago



Having run the surgical gauntlet over the past 16 years, I have on file a living will with among my medical files with the hospital, and it spells out clearly my desire to have the plug pulled if and when it's determined that death for me is imminent, rather than prolong my wife and family's ordeal of having me kept alive through artificial means.

Like Reply



JulieB

2 hours ago

@NickG Thank you for taking control. An elderly relative we were caring for ended up in hospice care, and while she fought until the end (that's what she wanted), she also understood that hospice was not a place to go to be put on life support. OTOH, a patient shouldn't expect someone would try to shorten what time they have left for the money.

Like Reply



TexasDavid

7 hours ago

Perhaps some day he'll end up in a hospice with the same staffers that he wanted for his own hospice.



3 🗨️ 👍 Like Reply



Jerry_Holding

11 hours ago

Wow HOPEFULLY HE WILL LIVE A VERY SHORT LIVE

1 👍 Like Reply



1stPlaceTexasRangers

12 hours ago

If Harris would stand in front of my car, I will see to it that he "goes bye-bye"

3 🗨️ 👍 Like Reply

BackpackGrandpa

9 hours ago



...without morphine!

4 Like Reply



FredFree loaf

32 minutes ago

Off Topic: After the 1stPlaceHoustonAstros beat the Yanks Monday noontime start
2ndPlaceTexasRangers' car gonna be in the rearview mirror.

Like Reply



1stPlaceTexasRangers

21 minutes ago

SI picked them to win the WS. This means certain doom.

Like Reply