

## Report on Medicare Compliance Volume 31, Number 15. April 25, 2022 Physician Group Settles FCA Allegations Over UDT Testing, PPP Fraud

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By Nina Youngstrom

Four separate whistleblower lawsuits got the ball rolling in a false claims case against a Florida physician group over urine drug testing (UDT) and kickbacks that gathered allegations of telemedicine and COVID-19 relief fraud by the time it was settled. The Department of Justice (DOJ) based the allegations of COVID-19 relief fraud—an undeserved Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan—on supposed false statements about billing compliance.

Physician Partners of America LLC (PPOA), which is headquartered in Tampa; its founder, anesthesiologist Rodolfo Gari; and its former chief medical officer, Abraham Rivera, agreed to pay \$24.5 million to settle false claims allegations, the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Middle District of Florida said April 12.<sup>[1]</sup>

PPOA owns and manages Florida Pain Relief Group and Texas Pain Relief Group and is the indirect owner of Medical Tox Labs, Medical DNA Labs and Physician Partners of America CRNA Operations LLC. DOJ partially intervened in the four whistleblower lawsuits filed against them in the middle district of Florida.

One of the whistleblowers was Donald Haight, who died during the investigation from a glioblastoma, said his attorney, Colette Matzzie, with Phillips & Cohen LLP. His widow continued with the case and will receive his share of the recovery.

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