



NOVEMBER 1, 1996

OIG REPORT 97-31(H)

MEMORANDUM FOR: FEDERAL CO-CHAIRMAN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Memorandum Survey Report--Follow up Review of J-1 Visa Waiver Program in Appalachian South Carolina (North Hills Medical Center, Greenville)

**BACKGROUND**

This review was conducted as a follow up to our survey of J-1 physicians at the North Hills Medical Center in Greenville, South Carolina earlier this year. OIG Report 96-46(H) of April 3, 1996 dealt with four J-1 physicians approved for the North Hills Medical Center's North Main Street facility. That report concluded that the physicians were performing in accordance with the provisions of the J-1 waiver program. However, because of concerns that one of the physicians was practicing cardiology in addition to primary care, we recommended that the employer assure that primary care constituted the major portion of the physician's practice.

Subsequent to our April 1996 report, we received information from an individual who indicated that the J-1 physician was practicing more cardiology than primary care. In addition, the physician was alleged to be practicing more at North Hill's Pelham Road facility (not in a HPSA) instead of at the North Main Street facility at which he was approved.

**OBJECTIVE**

The objective of our review was to determine the compliance with ARC J-1 program requirements that J-1 physicians perform 40 hours of primary care per week in an Appalachian HPSA.

**RESULTS**

On August 12-13, 1996, we made unannounced visits to North Hills Medical Center facilities on North Main Street and Pelham Road in Greenville, South Carolina. We located the J-1 physician at his approved location on North Main Street and we visited with his employer at the Pelham Road facility. The day of our visit with the physician was the last day of his 2-year commitment to ARC; however, he indicated he would continue to care for some of his patients at the North Main Street facility. He told us four full-time physicians were not necessary for that facility because there weren't enough patients. It was his understanding that he could fulfill his ARC requirement by caring for his patients at two local hospitals and the Pelham Road facility in addition to his approved location on North Main Street.

We also visited the two local hospitals to inquire about the physician's hospital practice. (We understand that both of them are located in a HPSA). We found that the physician treated patients requiring sub-specialty as well as primary care. The physician indicated cardiology cases comprise about 35 percent of his practice but some of them are considered primary care rather than sub-specialty. He told us he has reduced his sub-specialty work since another cardiologist who is not a J-1 joined the North Hills group in the summer of 1995.

The employer also told us that there were not enough patients at the North Main Street facility for the four J-1 physicians. He said even if there were enough patients, there wouldn't be enough room to accommodate them all. Initially, North Hills had planned to expand the facility to provide a larger waiting room and more treatment rooms and medical equipment. However, the state informed North Hills that future J-1 physicians in South Carolina would only be approved for non-profit organizations. North Hills management did not believe they would be able to recruit American physicians to replace the J-1s at the North Main Street facility. Therefore, they determined it would not be a good business decision to expand the facility if it was unlikely they could staff it if the J-1 physicians left.

The employer indicated he thought it was acceptable for the J-1 physicians to meet their 40-hour per week commitment to ARC by treating patients at locations other than the North Main facility, including the two local hospitals located in a HPSA and the medical group's Pelham Road facility which is not in a HPSA. The employer told us that the Pelham Road facility housed the North Hills laboratory as well as extensive medical and testing equipment. He indicated that patients from all four of their other clinics frequently came to Pelham Road for care because of its laboratory and testing capabilities. In addition, some patients who were previously treated at North Main come to Pelham Road because it is closer to their workplaces.

The employer further indicated that the North Hills facilities and a local hospital were the only places in town currently accepting Medicaid patients. He said North Hills currently treats about 70 patients per day and making all of them go to the North Main facility to increase the numbers there didn't seem like a reasonable solution.

#### RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that state officials monitor employers and J-1 physicians with sub-specialties to ensure they are performing primary care in accordance with their ARC agreements. We also recommend that additional J-1 requests for the Greenville area fully consider the availability and location of non J-1 physicians.

  
Hubert N. Sparks  
Inspector General

August 08, 1996

Dr. John Sanders  
Vice President Medical Staff  
Greenville Memorial Hosp. System  
701 Grove Road  
Greenville, SC  
29615

Dear Dr. Sanders:

I am writing you this letter in regards to the Degradation Of Medical Ethics and Professionalism at the North Hill Medical Center.

My family used to go to the North Hills but after the unfortunate death of our close friend Mr. Willie Dendy and talking to many other patients I am writing to you. It has been extremely frustrating. I had to put a lot of effort and spend lot of time to find all the details.

As you might have noticed for many years there has been high turnover of the Physicians at the above clinic. Generally many physicians spend about two years and are out of revolving door policy of the clinic and next batch of physicians will be inducted soon for this year. Every year new batch of mostly Foreign physicians after completing there training who instead of returning back to there Foreign countries find another way to settle permanently in the USA entering the J-1 VISA Waiver program offered by the ARC under very clear and strict guidelines (attached). Unfortunately they have never been followed and this Special Federal and State Program designed to provide primary care in the underserved areas is totally abused. This program requires the sponsored physicians to provide 40/hours per week in the primary care setting and only to visit hospital in emergency conditions. On the Contrary as you might have seen most of there time sis spent at the hospitals and at the main office on Pelham road these physicians mostly subspecialist practice their respective speciality at the area hospitals and leave in two years until the Permanent VISA (Green card) is processed.

Poor quality and irresponsible patient care stems from the pressure on the physicians to work mostly at the Hospitals against the Contractual agreement and guidelines of ARC. Most physicians can not also object to such demand by the clinic as their Status to stay in the country will be in serious Jeopardy .

Such practice going on for many years have given bad name to the noble profession specially in our area. I have never seen the exploitation of physicians to such a low level. Many Physicians are on J-1 Visa and under the (ARC) Appalachian Regional Commission Contract and also have Contract with state of S. Carolina to only work in the indigenous Shortage areas in the Greenville County only, and to provide 40/week at the 505 North main office of the clinic and not at the 800 Pelham Road main office to the poor underserved Community including Medicaid patients. But most of them spend most of their time in area Hospitals and rest at the Main office of the Clinic at the 800 Pelham main office.

Copy of the contract is supposed to be with the Governors office and local Hospitals. I am sure Hospitals will never participate knowingly in such an endeavor which is against the Federal and State Laws. You may need to check with the ARC or the State Governor Office for all the specified guidelines ( address given at the Bottom).

I am sure hospital will examine the issue closely and take appropriate steps.

Sincerely Yours,  
Matthew Young

ARC. address: Mr. Hubert Sparks , Chairman ARC  
1666 Connecticut ave N.W.  
Washington , DC 20235  
Tel: 202-884-7680

Governor David Beasley  
State House  
1st. floor West Wing  
Box 11369  
Columbia SC 29211

copy to : Richard C. Neugent CEO  
One St. Francis Drive  
Greenville SC  
29601



Greenville Hospital System  
John R. Sanders, MD  
Vice President, Medical Staff Services

August 22, 1996

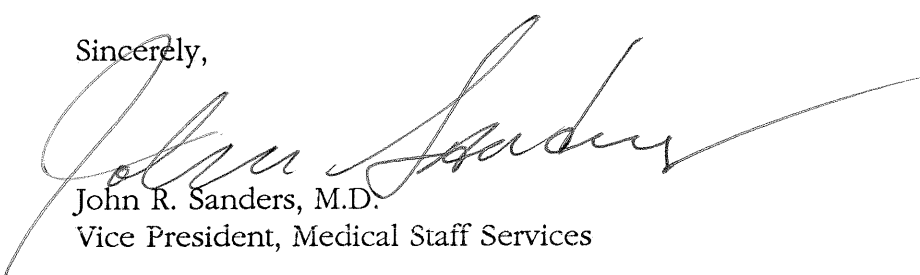
Mr. Hubert Sparks, Chairman  
Appalachian Regional Commission  
1666 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20235

Dear Mr. Sparks:

You have recently received a copy of a letter from a Mr. Matthew Young regarding the J-1 Visa Waiver program. I feel that this matter is primarily an administrative one between North Hills Medical Clinic and the Appalachian Regional Commission. The Greenville Hospital System Medical Staff Services office will cooperate as appropriate with the respective parties.

Please inform us of any requests or actions taken.

Sincerely,

  
John R. Sanders, M.D.  
Vice President, Medical Staff Services

JRS/ap

JoAnn — who is Matthew Young?

July 15, 1996

Mr Hubert Sparks  
Inspector General  
Appalachian Regional Commission  
Office of Federal Co-Chairman  
1660 Connecticut. Ave.  
Washington D.C. 20235

**Fraudulent Abuse of the ARC J-1 Waiver policy at the North Hill Medical Center  
Greenville.SC (Also Locally famous as VISA center among Foreign Physicians )**

Dear Mr.Sparks:

I have been watching the above abuse going on for the last many years since the inception of this Program and lately every conceivable limit have been crossed and I an compelled to write to you directly. I am also making your job easier by providing you the documentary evidence and hope you will take appropriate measures at your earliest.

I have lived in the vicinity of the North main office for years and poor people in this area depend for there health care needs from 505- North Main office clinic but the physicians under the ARC program hardly provide any service at this office.

North Hill Medical Center (NHMC) is a group of mainly foreign Physicians and is Famous as VISA center in this part of country among foreign Physicians. I have taken great pains to gather information and evidence I am supplying with this letter. After going through this information you may be astonished .

We have complained to the clinic many times but it appears that there main motive is to send these physicians to the Hospitals and make them work at there **Main office on Pelham Road.**

Briefly NHMC is a group of 30 doctors and have four offices. ARC waivers are only feasible through 505 North Main office but these physicians only spend about 5-6 hours a week at this facility for the financial gains of the clinic and there own and the underserved population for which this program is designed does not get any real service. This Group have four offices in Various parts of town as;

- A 800 Pelham Rd. Main office
- B 319 S.Buncombe Rd. Office
- C 315 W.Butler Rd.. Mauldin
- D **505 N. Main St. Office**      **Only ARC approved**

I am also providing you the documentary evidence and you will find how this cover up went undetected. This practice at the VISA center have gone for years and many physicians already processed and Currently there are Many physicians on the J-1 waiver program as **Dr Jay Patel and Dr.Minal Patel** .

At this stage I am only able to provide you information regarding **Only ONE of the Physician Dr. Jay Patel** and it may be the tip of the iceberg and also working on other cases.

North main office is mainly maintained by the Family Nurse Practicesnor and rest of the sponsored doctors rarely show up at the said clinic.

There are two Main Hospital in this Town and check with the Greenville Memorial Hospital Medical Staff office (Dr. Russell ) 701 Grove Road Greenville SC 29605 Tel ( 864- 455-7928)

Saint Francis Hospital St. Francis Drive Greenville SC 29601 Medical Staff Office. Mr.Richard Neugent Tel.( 864- 255- 1584) .You can directly find from these Hospitals the type of specialized practice the above named physicians is involved since the starting of the waiver program and type of specialist privledges obtained. The time spendend in the hospitals practicing respective specialities will speak for it self.

#### **Evidence Included is as**

- 1 .Brochure of the Group and the letters send to community to advertise
- 2 Copies of the Call schedule of the group
- 3 Letter of Hospital defining privledges
- 4-copy of the business Card.
- 5-Cardiology Call Coverage Internal Memo.
- 6-The listing directories of the various specialist
- 7-Local directories of specialists listing of Specialists attached to various HMO groups. Optimum Health Network and Maxicare and Hospital Physician booklets.
- 8-Physician Licensed in state as Specialist
- 9-Some of the reports of everyday practice as consultation practice and cardiac Cath./ Angioplasty/ Stents/ Echo Doppler / stress Thallium/ and various consultative reports of hunderds of procedures at both hospitals.
- 10-Local yellow Pages advertisement

## 11 Daily Schedule of practice at Main Office Oct-96

During every morning said Physician is involved performing the Invasive procedures at both the Hospitals and spend three afternoons at the Main Pehlam Office. only two afternoons Tuesday and Thursday are spend at the north main office totalling for about for 5-6 hours per week only. You will need to spend some time in the area and look for all the finer practical detailed

The above physician visits this clinic only twice a week only in the afternoons for Tuesday and Thursday only total about 2-3hours each visit and again provides consultative services as other group offices refer patients.

At times he may not come for months also. July, Aug, Sep, Oct 96 he did not come to the 505-North Main office at all. Oct 96 full month Schedule enclosed reflects he working every day at main office.(Enclosed)

Being a Invasive Cardiologist the most of time is spend performing hundreds of Cardiac Catheterization, Angioplasty procedures, Echo Doppler Examination, and stress thallium etc.at the Hospital and in the main office Pehlam Road.

**The billing records of the said physicians will tell you the real story. These records reflect type of Practice, Place, Time and the Procedural details** of the service provided by the physicians.After providing the service all physicians keeps all the records in the billing office. You will find more than nifty percent the practice is done contrary to the ARC requirement.

There must be many other aspects of this nature regarding your program at this center which I have no access yet.

Finally I will strongly request to study this information very carefully as it reflects such a misuse of Federal Govt. program . You also need to spend some time in the area watch it for some time specialty all these physicians spending most of there time at the Main Pehlam office especially on the 2nd floor.


Since ARC waiver programs run in so many states and I suggest that you may have direct contact with the area hospitals so such a abuse could be immediately checked.

The above detailed information is absolute facts of the day to day functioning of the said physician.

I hope after putting that much effort to bring facts to your personal attention about this blatant abuse of Federal program will be stopped immediately and I will not have to seek help of the elected officials form this area.




**This information is absolutely privileged and confidential for your office use only.**

  
Mr. Louise Drayton PhD  
405 Guess St.  
Greenville SC  
29601

See enclosed documents and labelled

Copy

  
Governor  
Honorable David M. Beasley  
State House  
1st floor, West wing  
Box 11369,  
Columbia SC 29211