Class Actions Against Some Insurers Now Closer to Reality

**BY ALICIA AULT**

Contributing Writer

Physicians frustrated with seemingly arbitrarily denied claims will have their day in court later this year with at least six insurers, thanks to a recent Supreme Court decision to deny the plans’ appeal of a class action suit. But settlements related to improper denials by Cigna and Aetna are likely to provide vindication even sooner.

The legal actions affect almost every practicing physician in the United States—about 900,000 doctors.

A series of suits, originally filed by several state and county medical societies, was consolidated in a U.S. District Court in Florida in 2000 and certified as a class action in 2002. The plans involved were Aetna, Anthem, Cigna, Coventry, HealthNet, Humana, PacificCare, Prudential, UnitedHealthcare, and WellPoint as defendants, and alleged that the plans violated the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) by engaging in fraud and extortion in a common scheme to wrongfully deny payment to physicians. The plans acknowledged the claims, but denied them.

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