

## Feds pressure Tenet; hospital may close

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The U.S. government wants to prohibit the Alvarado Hospital Medical Center in San Diego from taking part in Medicare and similar government programs.

The dispute concerns allegations that Alvarado paid kickbacks to physicians in exchange for patient referrals, The Wall Street Journal reported Tuesday.

The Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Inspector General is urging the exclusion from federal healthcare programs despite the failure of two federal juries to convict Alvarado or Tenet of criminal charges.

Tenet, which is the nation's second-largest hospital company and has headquarters in Dallas, says if the government puts the proposal into effect, it might be forced to close the hospital, thereby eliminating the jobs of hundreds of health-care workers and reducing "needed access to care for the communities of eastern San Diego County."

Tenet has been the focus of more than three years of federal government investigations into allegations of misconduct, the Journal noted. The OIG, more than two years ago, moved to bar a Tenet hospital in Redding, Calif., from taking part in Medicare, forcing Tenet to sell the facility.

No allegations of medical misconduct are involved in the Alvarado dispute.

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