

For Immediate Release  
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## **HMO Trial Against Aetna U.S. Healthcare Set to Begin Taxpayers Foot \$500,000 Bill Aetna Should Have Paid**

### **Suit Escapes ERISA and Arbitration Provisions**

### **County DA and Local Judges Expected to Testify on Behalf of Plaintiffs**

SAN BERNARDINO, CA -- Teresa Goodrich is finally getting her day in court. The kindergarten schoolteacher is suing Aetna -- the nation's largest HMO -- for refusing to pay for care recommended by the health plan's own doctors and specialists. Aetna left the widow with more than \$500,000 in medical bills following her husband's death -- bills that the taxpayers of San Bernardino County ultimately paid.

The jury trial against Aetna is set to commence on December 3, 1998. It comes on the heels of a congressional fight over managed care reform, a damaging Aetna videotape made public recently depicting company attorneys discussing ways to reduce medical costs and limit legal liability, and an exodus of more than 400 Aetna doctors from the healthcare company. The Aetna videotape also shows company officials giving more attention to cases in which patients have the right-to-sue their insurance company and to collect damages.

David Goodrich died prematurely at the age of 44 from a rare form of stomach cancer. He was a well-liked and respected career deputy district attorney from San Bernardino County. Witnesses expected to testify on his behalf include the District Attorney of San Bernardino County, Dennis Stout, and the Hon. Shala Sabet.

The Goodrich case is one of the lucky few to escape mandatory arbitration provisions and the 1974 federal ERISA law that bars most lawsuits against HMOs. More than 125 million Americans are enrolled in managed care plans.