

Baker Donelson Taps Ex-Strasburger Health Care Team

By **Andrew Westney**

Law360, New York (October 08, 2014, 2:42 PM ET) -- Baker Donelson Bearman Caldwell & Berkowitz has bolstered its health care practice with the addition to its Houston office of a team of four former Strasburger & Price LLP attorneys with expertise in mergers and acquisitions, private placement securities offerings, and management and employment contracts.

Stuart F. Miller and Marissa Weitzner Arreola joined the firm on Monday as shareholders alongside Ivan Wood Jr., who joins the firm as senior counsel, and associate Matthew Maruca, the firm said.

"We're committed to continuing the strategic growth of our Houston office through the addition of attorneys who are recognized leaders in their field," Bradley E. Chambers, managing shareholder of Baker Donelson's Houston office, said in a statement. "Bringing in such a strong group of attorneys marks a significant expansion of our presence in Houston and greatly enhances our capabilities in serving clients in the health care sector."

Miller's practice focuses on representing health care providers in corporate and regulatory matters, including handling health care joint ventures, mergers and acquisitions, entity formation and private placement securities offerings, and work on health care contracts including asset and stock purchase agreements, management agreements and employment agreements.

Arreola represents large hospital networks, hospitals and doctors in transactions and regulatory matters, including representing physician groups in acquisitions by private equity firms and developing and negotiating physician employment agreements. She formerly served as director of legal services for The Methodist Hospital System, headquartered in Houston's Texas Medical Center.

Wood represents clients in the health care industry in a variety of transactions including medical staff matters, Medicare fraud and abuse, regulatory matters, and the development of joint ventures, partnerships, private offerings and corporate reorganizations. He also has served as lead counsel in acquisitions involving hospitals, nursing homes, HMOs and non-health care businesses.

Maruca has experience working on health care facility management agreements, operating agreements, partnership agreements, medical director agreements, staffing agreements and facility and equipment leases.

Miller told Law360 on Wednesday that Baker Donelson's stacked roster gives his team many more resources to work with.

“They’ve got a real national focus, more in the South, but a nationwide presence in health care,” Miller said. “They have a deeper bench on a lot of transactional and regulatory issues, so if we get a big deal and have some kind of esoteric question, we have so many people to turn to.”

Miller and Wood worked together at Strasburger for 10 years before being joined by Arreola two years ago and Maruca early this year. Miller said Arreola and Maruca's in-house experience helped the group get to know and like each other — an important factor in the relatively small world of health care attorneys in Houston.

Maruca told Law360 that physicians are finding their revenues squeezed by regulations, and the team helps them look for creative ways to organize their practices. Arreola noted that the industry landscape continues to change, with consolidation and new ownership structures, such as insurance companies buying physician groups, changing the ways providers do business.

She added that the team can provide affordable, fast turnaround of services for clients of all sizes, from a small physicians' group to a large network.

Miller said that keeping the team's rates unchanged was a key component of its move to Baker Donelson.

“We like our clients. You work hard to get them, you don’t want them to think about leaving, and all clients obviously are fee-sensitive,” Miller said.

--Editing by Kelly Duncan.