

The New York Post, April 3, 2006 Monday

## **SPITZER ON THE HUNT FOR STATE'S TOP HEALTH-CARE 'CRIMINALS'**

BYLINE: CARL CAMPANILE

State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer has launched a massive manhunt to find nine of New York's health-care monsters - fugitives who are accused of ripping off millions from taxpayers in bogus Medicaid billing scams, peddling prescription drugs and abusing frail nursing-home patients, The Post has learned.

Many of the Nasty Nine are foreigners who are believed to have fled the country.

The "Most Wanted" list obtained by The Post includes a Pakistani native who allegedly billed Medicaid, the government's health-insurance program for the needy, more than a million dollars for services he never performed on hundreds of phantom patients.

Farhat Syed Quadri operated a medical clinic - called Citywide Ultrasound Group - out of a storefront on Queens Boulevard in Forest Hills. The firm performed sonograms on pregnant women and echocardiograms for heart patients.

In business for years, Quadri allegedly stole "in excess of \$1 million" by falsely billing Medicaid for bogus tests. He bought film used in the tests from a middleman to try to disguise the fraud, his indictment said. Born in Karachi, Quadri shut down his office and is believed to have fled to Pakistan after grand-larceny charges were filed against him.

Spitzer said Quadri and the others are in his cross hairs. Investigators from his Medicaid-fraud control unit last week flocked to the last known addresses of the fugitives, some of whom have been missing for a decade.

"When Medicaid cheats or other criminals flee the country or go into hiding, my office uses a variety of surveillance and investigative techniques to apprehend them," Spitzer told The Post.

"Warrants are issued and renewed, leads are pursued, and state, federal and international law-enforcement are all kept apprised of fugitives. Even criminals who flee to foreign countries will face charges."

Last year, Spitzer extradited fugitive quack plastic surgeon Dean Faiello from Costa Rica for allegedly murdering one of his patients. Three dozen fugitives have been apprehended since 1999.

Other alleged thieves on the Nasty Nine list include:

\* Doctor-businessman Peter Herman, who used his two companies - Stroke Prevention and Circulatory Testing Systems - to allegedly loot \$776,000 from Medicaid.

Herman, who also goes by the alias Peter Berger, is accused of illegally billing Medicaid for Doppler blood tests given to nursing-home patients as far back as 1996. His indictment alleges that the tests either were given by employees without medical backgrounds, or not all.

Herman disappeared after being charged with two counts of grand larceny and a count of offering a false instrument.

\* Satyanan Gosein, a bookkeeper for Beth Israel Medical Center who was in charge of paying vendors that performed hospital services. But instead, he turned greedy by allegedly forging and cashing more than \$200,000 in hospital checks in his name. Sources believe that Gosein fled to his native Trinidad after he was charged with grand larceny.

\* Podiatrist Chen Chuan is wanted for scamming Medicaid with a stinky shoe scheme. The Chinese native claimed to provide customized orthotics, arch support for the feet, to hundreds of Medicaid patients at his office at 8 Chatham Square.

But authorities say at least \$93,000 in Medicaid claims he filed were bogus.

Four other fugitives, three of whom may now be in the Dominican Republic, are accused of engaging in Medicaid drug theft and diversion scams.

Julio Gonzalez allegedly used 22 doctored Medicaid cards to fill 61 prescriptions worth thousands of dollars. Gonzalez was charged with grand larceny after pharmacists in Queens fingered him as a pill dealer.

His last known address is Academy Street in Washington Heights. A relative there confirmed that Gonzalez is in the Dominican Republic.

Convicted drug dealer Luis Cruz, a.k.a. Hymie Cruz, pleaded guilty to two counts of possession of a forged instrument for using a forged Medicaid card to get prescriptions. Facing four years in prison, the Puerto Rican native failed to show up in court for his sentencing.

Ramon Llaverias of Queens and Victor Pineyro of The Bronx also are wanted for illegally buying thousands of dollars of prescription drugs. Llaverias' last known address is 35-51 95th St. in Jackson Heights, and Pineyro gave a bogus address on Pelham Parkway South.

The only woman on the list is Robin Stultz, a nursing assistant who was arrested in 2003 for allegedly slapping a mentally incompetent patient in the face at the Folts Nursing Home in upstate Herkimer County. Facing public-health and endangerment charges, she flew the coop.

The Attorney General's Office investigates patient abuse as well as health-care fraud.

Democrat Spitzer is considered the favorite in his quest to succeed lame-duck Republican Gov. Pataki. And Medicaid fraud has emerged as a burning issue in the governor's race.

Spitzer's crusade against misdeeds on Wall Street corruption has burnished his image as a fighter for the little guy.

But his opponents argue the attorney general hasn't been as aggressive in prosecuting public corruption - particularly abuses in New York's massive \$45 billion Medicaid program.

Spitzer disagrees.

He points out that his Medicaid fraud-control unit recovered a record \$219 million last year - a 150 percent increase over the prior year. The 245 successful cases include 122 convictions and 123 successful civil-enforcement actions, including big-ticket cases against pharmaceutical companies, hospitals and nursing homes.

As part of a federal and multistate probe, Spitzer's office recovered more than \$80 million from Serono Inc., a Massachusetts-based company accused of illegally boosting sales of an anti-AIDS drug called Serostim - by paying kickbacks to doctors and pharmacists and marketing the drug for purposes not approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration.

Serostim is illicitly used by body builders and other athletes to build muscle mass.

Spitzer complained the state budget just approved by lawmakers does not include his suggested measures to help his office better combat Medicaid fraud. He recommended a False Claims Act - used at the federal level - that allows whistleblowers to file lawsuits against Medicaid scammers and receive a percentage of the recoveries.

Discussions on Medicaid reforms are ongoing.

"I urge them to reach agreement on a strong Medicaid-fraud reform package as soon as possible," Spitzer said.

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New York's most-wanted medical fugitives - Details of schemes, as alleged by Eliot Spitzer:

**RAMON LLAVERIAS**

Date of birth: Jan. 29, 1962

Birthplace: Dominican Republic

Occupation: Prescription-drug peddler

Charge: Criminal diversion of prescription medication

Amount stolen: Unknown

Scheme: Bought prescription drugs off street and resold them

JULIO GONZALEZ

Alias: Edwardo Gonzalez

Date of birth: Nov. 26, 1949

Birthplace: Dominican Republic

Occupation: Prescription-drug peddler

Amount stolen: Thousands of dollars

Charge: Grand Larceny, theft of Medicaid program

Scheme: Used 22 different Medicaid cards to fill 61 prescriptions

FARHAT SYED QUADRI

Alias: Karim Gora

Date of birth: Nov. 19, 1963

Birthplace: Karachi, Pakistan

Occupation: Owner of Citywide Ultrasound Group

Amount stolen: Over \$1 million

Charge: Grand larceny in first degree

Scheme: Stole more than \$1 million from Medicaid by filing phony financial reports of performing sonograms and echocardiograms to hundreds of patients

VICTOR PINEYRO

Alias: Victor Santiago

Date of birth: March 17, 1957

Birthplace: Dominican Republic

Occupation: Convicted peddler of prescription drugs

Amount stolen: unknown

Charge: Two counts of criminal diversion of prescription medication Scheme: Bought prescription drugs off street and resold them

CHEN CHUAN

Date of birth: Dec. 12, 1952

Birthplace: China

Occupation: Podiatrist

Amount stolen: Nearly \$100,000

Charge: Two felony charges of grand larceny in second degree and filing falsified instruments in first degree

Scheme: Falsely billed Medicaid for nearly \$100,000, claiming he provided orthotics to hundreds of patients. He never did.

ROBIN STULTZ

Occupation: Nursing assistant

Charge: Willful violation of public health law, endangering welfare of mentally incompetent nursing home patient.

Offense: Slapped nursing home patient

PETER HERMAN

Occupation: Physician, Circulatory Testing Systems

Amount stolen: \$776,000

Charge: Grand larceny and filing false instrument

Scheme: Billed Medicaid for unauthorized and unnecessary blood tests

SATYANAN GOSEIN

Birthplace: Trinidad

Occupation: Bookkeeper, Beth Israel Medical Center

Amount stolen: Over \$200,000

Charge: Grand Larceny in second degree

Scheme: Cashed forged hospital checks to himself

LUIS CRUZ

Alias: Hymie Cruz

Date of birth: Sept. 10, 1947

Birthplace: Puerto Rico

Occupation: Convicted drug peddler

Amount stolen: Unknown

Charges: pleaded guilty to two counts of possession of forged instrument in second degree. Failed to show for sentencing

Scheme: Bought prescription drugs with a forged Medicaid card

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