

*Jackie Lacey*  
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NEWS RELEASE

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**Charges Refiled in Massive Insurance Fraud,  
Patient Scam Conspiracy**

Criminal charges were refiled today against a dozen people accused of participating in a \$150 million workers' compensation insurance fraud scheme, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Earlier today, Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Kathleen Kennedy granted the prosecution's motion to dismiss the charges against the same 12 defendants, who were indicted by a grand jury in 2015. The charges were immediately refiled in three separate criminal complaints.

Prosecutors divided the larger case into three smaller ones in an effort to streamline the complex litigation and refile several counts that previously had been dismissed.

The charges in the three complaints supersede the two previous indictments, which were unsealed in September 2015. The indictments remain against orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Munir Uwaydah, and his office manager, Wendee Luke, both of whom are fugitives.

Deputy District Attorneys Dayan Mathai, Catherine Chon, Karen Nishita and Kennes Ma are prosecuting the case.

Prosecutors said the conspiracy allegedly included paying lawyers and marketers as much as \$10,000 a month for illegal patient referrals, known as "capping."

Nearly two dozen patients allegedly were deceived into having surgeries they thought would be performed by Uwaydah. Instead, defendant Peter Nelson, a physician's assistant who never attended medical school, carried out invasive and sometimes unnecessary surgeries. Uwaydah was not present in the operating room for all surgeries, prosecutors said.

In addition, 21 patients have lasting physical scars and many needed additional surgeries to repair the original injury.

Those charged also are accused of fraudulently billing tens of millions of dollars to insurance companies for fraudulent surgeries, prescription medications, fake MRIs, falsifying medical reports and office visits.

Six people are charged in case BA455469 and each face a possible maximum sentence of life in state prison. Charges include conspiracy, aggravated mayhem, insurance fraud, money laundering, filing a false tax return and unlawful patient referral. The defendants are:

- Paul Turley (dob 11/12/62) of Granada Hills: chiropractor and Uwaydah's business partner.
- Maria Turley (dob 3/4/67) of Granada Hills: Uwaydah's director of surgery and Paul Turley's wife.
- Peter Nelson (dob 8/1/71) of Redondo Beach: Uwaydah's physician assistant and Marisa Schermbeck Nelson's husband.
- Marisa Schermbeck Nelson (dob 11/29/76) of Redondo Beach: Uwaydah's personal assistant.
- Kelly Park (dob 10/10/65) of Thousand Oaks: Uwaydah's office manager and personal assistant.
- Tatiana Torres Arnold (dob 1/6/70) of Encino. Uwaydah's personal attorney who held various positions for Uwaydah's companies.

Three people are charged in case BA455470 with conspiracy, money laundering, making a false and fraudulent claim and unlawful patient referral. They each face up to 57 years in prison.

- Ronnie Case (dob 4/11/76) of Camarillo: billing manager.
- Jeffrey Stevens (dob 4/4/51) of Playa Del Rey: Uwaydah's business associate.
- Leticia Alvarez Lemus (dob 2/9/77) of Corona: office manager.

In case BA455473, three people are charged with conspiracy, money laundering, making a false and fraudulent claim and unlawful patient referral. The possible maximum sentences range from 15 to 26 years.

- Terry Luke (dob 1/23/45) of Brea. Held various positions for Uwaydah's companies and defendant Wendee Luke's father.
- Tony Folgar (dob 11/24/57) of Sylmar: paralegal for a law firm.
- Yolanda Groscost (dob 7/16/66) of Fountain Valley: owner of a marketing firm.

Arrest for all 12 defendants was continued to April 26.

The case remains under investigation by the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Bureau of Investigation and the Organized Crime Division.

## **About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office**

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.