

Cancer doc admits scam, giving patients unneeded chemo

Tresa Baldas, Detroit Free Press Staff Writer 1:26 p.m. EDT September 17, 2014

The government says Farid Fata used a Hotmail account to execute his alleged crimes.



(Photo: Carlos Osorio/Associated Press)

In a crowded courtroom in downtown Detroit, the onetime prominent cancer doctor stood before the judge.

With his hands cuffed and his head lowered, the man in the bright red jail suit made a surprise move.

Dr. Farid Fata, who was charged with intentionally misdiagnosing healthy people with cancer and pumping dying patients with chemo to make money, pleaded guilty.

"It is my choice," Fata said on Tuesday of his surprise guilty plea, which included rattling off the names of numerous drugs he prescribed for his patients over the years. In each admission, he uttered these words:

"I knew that it was medically unnecessary."

Fata, 49, a married father of three, pleaded guilty to 13 counts of health care fraud, two counts of money laundering and one count of conspiracy to pay and receive kickbacks. He faces sentencing in February before U.S. District Judge Paul Borman.

U.S. Attorney Barbara McQuade said she plans to seek life in prison for Fata, calling his case is "the most egregious" health care fraud case her office has seen. She said Fata not only bilked the government -- which is typical in such cases -- but he also harmed patients.



In a surprise move, cancer doctor Farid Fata pleaded guilty today to his role in a health care scam. U.S. Attorney Barbara McQuade talks about the case. Tresa Baldas

"In this case, we had Dr. Fata administering chemotherapy to people who didn't need it, essentially putting poison into their bodies and telling them that they had cancer when they didn't have cancer," McQuade told the Free Press. "The idea that a doctor would lie to a patient just to make money is shocking ... Dr. Fata was unique in that he saw patients not as people to heal, but as commodities to exploit."

McQuade said her office wasn't completely surprised by the sudden guilty plea, which came during what was supposed to be a hearing on evidence that would be presented at trial.

Fata's lawyers, Mark Kriger and Christopher Andreoff, declined comment.

- [PDF:Criminal complaint against Dr. Farid Fata \(/assets/freep/pdf/C4210135813.PDF\)](/assets/freep/pdf/C4210135813.PDF)



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(<http://www.freep.com/article/20130813/NEWS03/308130110/Fata-bond-hearing-cancer>)

Fata of Oakland Township was charged with running a \$35-million Medicare fraud scheme that involved billing the government for medically unnecessary oncology and hematology treatments. The government says Fata ran the scheme from 2009 to the present, through his medical businesses, including Michigan Hematology Oncology Centers (<http://www.michigancancercenter.com/home.aspx>), with offices in Clarkston, Bloomfield Hills, Lapeer, Sterling Heights, Troy and Oak Park.

According to the government, Fata had a patient load of 1,200 people and received \$62 million from Medicare; he billed for more than \$150 million.

Fata, a native of Lebanon, has lived in Michigan for a decade and became a naturalized citizen in 2009. He is being held on \$9 million bond.

Angela Swantek, a chemotherapy nurse who blew the whistle on Fata to state authorities in 2010, was in the courtroom during Fata's guilty plea. She said she was relieved to hear him admit to things she witnessed years ago in his office. "I'm numb," she said in a court hallway. "I'm not surprised though; I wondered how his team was going to defend him. The charts don't lie."

Swantek, 45, of Royal Oak, said she went to Fata's office for a job interview in 2010 when she saw patients getting chemotherapy in a manner that wasn't correct. "I left after an hour and half. I thought this is insane," she said.

That same day, Swantek went home and wrote a letter to the state and suggested they investigate him.

According to Swantek, the state did nothing and notified her in 2011 that they had found no wrongdoing.

"I handed them Dr. Fata on a platter in 2010 and they did absolutely nothing," said Swantek, noting she was elated when she learned the federal government charged Fata in 2013.

"I started crying," she said. "I thought about all of the patients he took care of and harmed."

Cynthia Burt, whose sister was a patient of Fata's, also was in the courtroom. She believes Fata pleaded guilty because he "knew the evidence was bad against him."

"I feel sorry that we're not going to hear the entire story," Burt said. "But I'm glad that he's convicted."

As for his punishment, Burt said: "I want him to get life."

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