Surgeon Charged With Fraud For Faking Operations

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An orthopedic surgeon accused of botching or faking hundreds of surgeries surrendered today and was charged with one count of healthcare fraud.

Dr. Spyros Panos, who worked in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., was arrested this morning at the federal court in White Plains, N.Y. He pleaded not guilty to the felony charge and was released on $100,000 bail.

It's not clear from court documents how much jail time Panos could face if convicted, if any, but the charge carries a fine up to $5 million.

The charges accuse Panos of making false representations of the services he performed. For example, Panos claimed he performed various techniques and procedures during surgery when in fact he did not, either because they weren't medically necessary or because they would have resulted in reduced payments from insurance providers. He is also charged with trying to cover up his alleged crimes by blaming them on clerical errors.

Paul Hugel, the attorney representing Panos on criminal charges, asked the court to set a date for a future hearing but said he was working on a deal with federal authorities and hoped it would be in place within the next two weeks before Panos' next appearance. Neither Hugel nor any of the federal prosecutors would comment on the details of the potential deal.

Judge Lisa Smith ordered Panos to surrender his passport and submit to at least 30 days of court supervision and mandatory mental health counseling. Panos told the court he was already receiving counseling for depression.

Lee Rezin, the U.S. one of the federal attorneys prosecuting the case, told the court that the charges revolved around Panos' alleged scheme to defraud Medicare, state insurance funds and private insurance companies. He said that Panos filed descriptions of fake surgeries so he could get paid for more work than he performed.

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