

## **Thousands Still Not Warned of Hepatitis Exposure at Las Vegas Clinics**

*Two Las Vegas clinics are linked to an outbreak of hepatitis C and HIV. The Nevada Health District sent more than 40,000 "Dear Patient" letters to those treated after March 2004. Patients treated before March 2004 have not been warned that they are at risk of infection of these contagious diseases.*

(Vocus) May 22, 2008 -- The Southern Nevada Health District recently sent over 40,000 letters to patients who were treated at the Endoscopy Center of Southern Nevada. The Las Vegas clinic and its affiliate, the Desert Shadow Endoscopy Center, are both linked to an [outbreak of hepatitis C and HIV](#). However, only patients treated after March 2004 received warnings.

The "Dear Patient" letter states:

"This letter serves as notification that you have been identified in clinic records as a former patient of the clinic who was placed at risk for possible exposure to bloodborne pathogens. As a precaution, and in order to take appropriate steps to protect your health, we recommend you get tested for hepatitis C, hepatitis B, and HIV."

"It is not possible to determine specifically which people were exposed, but all patients who received injected anesthesia at the center have been placed at increased risk for exposure."

The Health District has not yet warned patients who were treated before March 2004 that they were exposed to infection, although several such patients have already reportedly contracted hepatitis C and HIV. Investigators recently uncovered records of another 10,000 patients who have not yet been warned of their exposure to these very deadly and contagious diseases.

"The Health District should issue a nationwide health advisory to all patients who were treated at the clinics since they opened in 2000," according to Mike Hissey, an attorney with [Hissey Kientz, LLP](#) in Austin, Texas.

An investigation by the Health District found that staff members at the Endoscopy Center of Southern Nevada and the Desert Shadow Endoscopy Center were reusing the syringes and medicine vials used to inject anesthesia, as well as biopsy forceps and other medical equipment. Nurses who worked at the two clinics said they were told by doctors to reuse single-use medical equipment, according to investigators.

Because of these unsafe injection practices, [more than 50,000 patients may have been exposed](#) to hepatitis C, HIV or another serious blood-borne illness. More than 850 former patients have already filed cases after being exposed to or contracting hepatitis C; seven additional patients have reportedly contracted HIV according to their attorneys.

Investigators also discovered that clinic doctors were routinely performing colonoscopies in as little as two minutes. These procedures ordinarily require 15 to 30 minutes in order to be performed safely. Medical records

also show that doctors sometimes performed colonoscopies on two different patients at the same time.

Malpractice complaints filed against Dr. Dipak Desai and Dr. Eladio Carrera--the co-owners of the Endoscopy Center of Southern Nevada--allege that both doctors performed colonoscopies on patients who later tested positive for hepatitis C (Case No. A561921 and A561922). A judge recently issued a temporary restraining order against Dr. Desai and Dr. Carrera to prevent them from practicing medicine pending an investigation by the Nevada Board of Medical Examiners.

Health authorities are investigating the doctors for possible criminal behavior, insurance fraud and medical malpractice. The city of Las Vegas has already forced the two clinics to surrender their business licenses and pay \$500,000 in fines as a result of the unsafe injection practices which occurred there.

#### About Hissey Kientz, LLP

Hissey Kientz, LLP is currently accepting cases involving individuals who may have been exposed to hepatitis C or another serious illness at the Las Vegas clinics. Hissey Kientz, LLP also represents those who contracted mesothelioma or lung cancer as a result of asbestos exposure, those injured by dangerous drugs and medical devices including the Ortho Evra Patch, heparin allergic reactions, Trasylol, the Composix Kugel mesh patch and other defective drugs and devices. To learn more about the firm and other drug cases, visit Hissey Kientz, LLP ([www.hkllp.com](http://www.hkllp.com)) or call toll-free at (866) 275-4454.

###

**Contact Information****Craig Whitney**

Hissey Kientz, LLP

<http://www.hkllp.com>

512-320-9100

**Online Web 2.0 Version**You can read the online version of this press release [here](#).**PRWebPodcast Available**[Listen to Podcast MP3](#) [Listen to Podcast iTunes](#) [Listen to Podcast OGG](#)