



Las Vegas' Medical Mafia

Written On August 20, 2009 By [Bob Kraft](#)

[CNNMoney.com](#) has an alarming article about alleged legal and medical fraud in Las Vegas. This kind of story gives all lawyers a black eye, and I wish the State Bars in every state would crack down on illegal and unethical abuses by personal injury lawyers and their medical accomplices. The gist of the story is that a middle-man named Awand convinced auto accident victims to hire a lawyer, go to a doctor, and undergo unnecessary surgeries in order to inflate the values of their cases. It is important to note that nothing has yet been proved in this case, but the allegations are very serious. Here are a few excerpts:

Prosecutors charge that a group of top Las Vegas plaintiffs lawyers and doctors, with the 64-year-old Awand at its center, conspired in an audacious fraud. The participants appeared to act independently but instead colluded. Unwitting accident victims were recruited as plaintiffs and then persuaded to undergo serious, sometimes needless, surgeries. The procedures, in turn, helped inflate the size of personal-injury claims. The result was multimillion-dollar insurance settlements, even for dubious cases, and lucrative fees for the doctors, the lawyers, and, of course, Howard Awand.

The alleged scheme began in 1999 and lasted for at least six years, prosecutors charge. Business and court records and local press reports suggest that the group — which numbered about 30 — colluded in hundreds of suits that yielded hundreds of millions in settlements. According to government evidence, the group coordinated their testimony as expert witnesses, lied under oath, protected one another from malpractice lawsuits — even after the surgeries left a few patients paralyzed — and ate away at the plaintiffs' settlement money with kickbacks disguised as contingency fees.

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