Dr. Dementia

Murder defense fails

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ACalifornia MD failed to persaude a jury that HIV-related dementia made him plot the murder of his ex-lover. Last May, Gary Parkison was convicted of conspiracy and insurance fraud—and found sane—despite his lawyer's arguments that dementia-fueled paranoia triggered his gun-for-hire scheme.

In 1996, a friend whom Parkison had told about the murder set up a sting. At a shopping mall, Parkison met up with an undercover cop posing as a hit man who offed Parkison's ex, Jim Swan. After seeing faked photos of the "dead" Swan, Parkison unwittingly paid the cop $5,000, and was then arrested.

During the trial, two out of three medical experts said Parkison had mild dementia. According to his lawyer, Parkison was on no anti-HIV meds and believed that his ex was trying to ruin his medical practice. But, prosecutors pointed out, he continued to work while plotting the murder. Prosecutor Larry Barnes called Parkison's use of the AIDS dementia defense "an insult" to PWAs.

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