# Pharmacy Mogul Arrested in Alleged Medicaid Fraud Involving HIV Meds

The scheme robbed indigent patients of lifesaving HIV treatment, claims the New York State attorney general.

March 14, 2019 By Trent Straube

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A man who ran a chain of pharmacies across New York City has been arrested and charged with operating a Medicaid scam that defrauded patients, notably indigent people living with HIV, reports The New York Daily News.

New York State Attorney General Letitia James filed the lawsuit alleging Aftab Hussain laundered millions through phony corporations, real estate companies and several different bank accounts.

According to the lawsuit, workers at one pharmacy in Harlem encouraged Medicaid clients living with HIV to sell back their HIV meds to the pharmacy. Prescriptions could cost more than $2,000 a bottle, but Hussain's team would offer $25 to $100 per bottle, which they would then put back on the shelves to resell.

Of course, this means that clients living with HIV would not be taking their daily meds, which is detrimental to their health and could cause their virus to mutate and their viral load to rise to a detectable and transmittable level.

The lawsuit also claims that a raid at a property owned by one of Hussain's pharmacies found 280 boxes of meds that were adulterated, expired or diverted.

Another part of Hussain's scheme, according to the Daily News, involved opening a new pharmacy and stocking it with a small amount of legitimate meds along with drugs from unauthorized places, then taking Medicaid reimbursements before selling the pharmacy or changing the ownership on paper.

"These pharmacies…dispense diverted medications, for which the origin and quality cannot be verified, to unsuspecting patients," the AG's office wrote, according to the Daily News. "Various insurers, including government-funded health care programs such as Medicaid will pay for the same bottle of medication twice."

According to the Daily News, the pharmacies listed in the lawsuit were mostly located in the

Hamilton Heights section of Manhattan; Mount Vernon, in Westchester County; and the Bronx. They include:

- Harlem Super Pharmacy
- E-Green Pharmacy (also known as WinHealth Pharmacy)
- Broadway Rx
- A&Z Drug Store (also known as Ankerson Pharmacy)
- Health Smart Pharmacy (renamed Health Smart Rx)

Hussain is being held on $2 million bail. James wants to seize more than $26 million from Hussain and his team.

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