

# TEMECULA: Doctor among 301 arrested in \$900 million nationwide fraud crackdown

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Dr. Donald Woo Lee, in a 2014 mug shot taken when he was charged with money laundering and grand theft in Riverside County Superior Court. Lee now faces federal charges of health care fraud and has pleaded not guilty.

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A Temecula doctor is among 22 Southland residents charged in a nationwide health fraud crackdown that federal authorities say involved 301 defendants and \$900 million in false billings.

Fifty-year-old Dr. Donald Woo Lee was arrested Tuesday, June 21, and pleaded not guilty to seven counts of health care fraud. He is accused of billing Medicare \$12,448,300 for unnecessary vein ablation procedures performed at his clinics in Temecula and the Mira Loma area of Jurupa Valley. He was released on bond.

The new charges are the most recent legal difficulties for Lee, who continues to face prosecution in a [2014 grand theft and money laundering case](#) also involving Prime Partners Medical Group in Temecula, court records show. He has pleaded not guilty to those charges.

“The cases filed in the Southland involve actual losses of more than \$125 million, with the bulk of those losses associated with five cases related to schemes involving compounding pharmacies,” federal prosecutors wrote about the new case. “Compounding pharmacies were provided with large numbers of prescriptions, generally for pain medications, that carried huge reimbursements, often more than \$15,000 for each prescription.

“The prescriptions were written by doctors who received kickbacks from marketers or from ‘telemedicine’ websites that had little or no contact with patients.”

In many cases, prosecutors say, the supposed patients did not want the prescriptions, had never met the prescribing doctors, or had no idea why they were receiving the medications that often were creams that would supposedly treat minor pain, scars, erectile dysfunction or “general wellness.”

Among the 22 Southland defendants are five doctors, a psychiatrist, a pharmacist, and an occupational therapist. More than \$161 million in allegedly fraudulent billings were submitted to publicly funded health care programs, including Medicare and the military’s managed health care program, TRICARE.

In one case, Dana Point marketer John Garbino is charged with receiving illegal kickbacks after referring prescriptions to pharmacies that billed TRICARE. A Palmdale pharmacy allegedly received more than \$46 million from TRICARE — in six months — and Garbino is accused of receiving kickbacks as high as 65 percent.

In another case, three defendants are accused of defrauding health plans established for Federal Express workers and members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union.

“Participants in (that) scheme allegedly paid beneficiaries...to undergo unnecessary sleep and nerve conduction velocity studies that were then billed to the plans,” according to the prosecutors’ statement. “The defendants operated facilities in Sherman Oaks and San Pedro.”