

HEALTH SCANDALS: Doctors feeling pressure

"You already make \$3 million dollars a year," Carrison said of Dr. Dipak Desai, the majority owner of the Endoscopy Center of Southern Nevada. "Why in God's name do you need more money?"

"As physicians, we're all kind of demoralized," said Dr. Mark Barry, a pediatric orthopedic surgeon. "Our reputation is collectively tarnished by these scandals."

"The reputation of the medical care in this community has not been very highly regarded around the nation," gastroenterologist Dr. Julian Lopez said. "Now this is just proof positive of the medical care in Las Vegas."

Dr. James Tate, a trauma surgeon and Association of Black Physicians president, said the problems at the Endoscopy Center of Southern Nevada "puts a real black eye on the state of Nevada."

"I thought it was an inexcusable, appalling breach of aseptic technique" to control contamination, said Dr. Don Havins, Clark County Medical Society president and an oncologist.

Some doctors wondered about the role of greed in the crisis. Dr. Dale Carrison, chairman of emergency medicine at University Medical Center, said endangering patients in order to save money is akin to "selling your soul."

Vegas Hepatitis Exposure List Incomplete

"We're finding problems at a variety of different levels — medication reuse, in some cases syringe reuse in different procedures and functions. That's why one of our very first actions is the need to get the word out on the street."

-Lisa Jones, head of the Nevada State Licensing Bureau, testifying to a legislative committee on health care.

Health District Chief Lawrence Sands said those practices are "unacceptable" and "should never have happened." Sands said reusing syringes and vials of medication was a well-known violation of common safety standards, and he called for better oversight, whistleblower protection and education within the medical community.

Las Vegas Closes Clinic Connected To Hepatitis C Outbreak

"This is the largest number of patients that have ever been contacted for a blood exposure in a health-care setting. But unfortunately we have seen other large-scale situations where similar practices have led to patient exposures."

-CDC head Dr. Julie Gerberding

Rolling the Dice with Patient Health: The Law of Averages Catches Up with a Vegas Surgi-Center

"I find it baffling, frankly, that in this day and age anyone would think it was safe to reuse a syringe," said Michael Bell, associate director for infection control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Wanda Wilson, PhD, president of the 37,000 member AANA: "It is astounding that in this day and age there are nurse anesthetists, anesthesiologists, and other health care professionals who still risk using needles and syringes on more than one patient, or know of such activities and don't report them. Published standards and guidelines dictate that single-use and disposal of these products is the best way to ensure patient safety. Patient safety is our primary focus—not cost savings, time savings, or any other factor."

"These types of incidents are completely unacceptable, and the AANA is determined to help uncover the root cause and correct the problem."

Related clinics closed

"The practices at their sister facility requires us to take action to protect the public," [Commissioner Rory Reid](#) said, referring to the Las Vegas clinic. "When dealing with such serious matters, it is best to treat each situation with an abundance of caution to minimize the risk to the public."

"These are serious accusations and call for an equally serious response," Commissioner Lawrence Weekly said. "We are dealing with deadly diseases and so, to put it simply, it is better to be safe than sorry."

Commissioner Bruce Woodbury agreed.

"The alleged practices of this group are troubling and totally unacceptable," Woodbury said. "It is our responsibility to make sure businesses are operating in a safe and lawful manner."

More clinic offices closed

Henderson City Councilman Steve Kirk said the inspector was there to gather information, not close the facility. But Kirk, who serves as chairman of the Southern Nevada Health District board of directors, wasn't disappointed by the outcome.

"In my opinion, they ought to never be able to open again," he said. "It's unconscionable what they've done, quite frankly. I think everyone is outraged."

Husband, wife suspect clinic source of infection

"I thought, 'Oh my God. Somebody gave this to me,'" she said. "Here I am, for a year, thinking I did something."

"I know I couldn't have possibly gotten it anywhere else," she said.

"You swear when you enter the medical profession you do no harm," she said. "What happened to that?"

Deborah Hilty 58-year-old day care owner|

Physicians' licenses targeted

Doug Cooper, chief of investigations for the Nevada Board of Medical Examiners, said he can't be part of a rush to judgment.

"We need to know for sure which doctors were involved," he said. "The doctors deserve due process of law."

Assembly Speaker Barbara Buckley, D-Las Vegas, who attended the legislative meeting, urged Clark to move as quickly as possible with the investigation.

"I think the only thing that is really important is -- when you have a public health crisis where people's lives have been placed at risk -- it's important to take action quickly," she said. "Obviously you must comply with due process.

"But if the allegations are found to be true by the appropriate bodies, we need strong action.

"When you risk people's lives and give them a deadly disease to line your own pockets, the answer is revocation of licenses and the largest fines available under the law," Buckley said.

The public needs to know there is going to be an investigation and that it is conducted in a timely manner, she said.

Cooper said the Nevada Board of Medical Examiners wasn't notified in timely fashion.

"We didn't even find out about this until the media did," he said.

He said on Monday that he subpoenaed records from the Southern Nevada Health District for the six known patients who have contracted hepatitis C. He has yet to receive them.