CONTACT: James Quiggle 202-393-7331; jamesq@Insurancefraud.org

9 MOST-BRAZEN INSURANCE FRAUDSTERS CHOSEN IN NEW YORK FOR 2019
Convicted scammers highlight the high cost of insurance crime in New York


New York’s nine most-brazen insurance fraudsters of 2019 were chosen by the New York Alliance Against Insurance Fraud. All were convicted.

Insurance scams steal hundreds of millions of dollars in New York annually. All New Yorkers pay for fraud. Staged crashes and other automobile schemes, for example, help raise premiums that honest drivers pay. The Legion of Shame draws higher public scrutiny of the high cost of insurance crime throughout New York. Report fraud by calling tollfree 1-844-FRAUDNY.

Airbag scam. Auto parts business owner Raymond Whelan (Cheektowaga) imported fake and unsafe airbags from China. Whelan sold more than 360 bogus airbags. Potentially hundreds of drivers have bogus airbags that may not open during crashes. Insurers also pay full price for inexpensive knockoff airbags installed during repairs.

Phony falls tripped up. Dr. Peter Kalkanis (New York City) led a fraud ring that launched $32 million of fake slip-and-fall injuries. The ring recruited hundreds of people to stage slip-and-falls and lie they were hurt. Ring members falsely blamed sidewalk cracks and other problems. Kalkanis forced indigent people to undergo surgeries to further inflate false claims against innocent insurers and businesses.

Hit and done. Anthony J. DiFilippo (Niagara Falls) killed a teen in a hit-and-run incident. He then padded a claim after the teen’s grief-stricken mother drove into his garage door and damaged his car. The Niagara Falls-area man struck Ryan Fischer
and sped off. Ryan’s mother later rammed and damaged his car and garage door. DiFilippo inflated the car-damage claim — for the vehicle that killed Ryan.

**Bouncer plot bounced.** NYPD officer George Scparta claimed he was hurt on the job. Yet he secretly was a bouncer at a strip club. Scparta falsely received more than $638,000 of disability money. Anxiety and depression prevented him from doing his cop duties after an injury, Scparta falsely claimed.

**Pill mill peril.** Dr. Dante Cubanbang ran one of the largest pill mills in New York state history. He sold more than six million addictive pain pills from his Queens pain-management clinic for no medical reason. He wrote 19,000 medically unneeded prescriptions to purported patients. The pills went onto the streets, defrauding Medicare, Medicaid and private insurers in the process. Cubanbang received around $5.7 million in patient fees alone. Cubanbang will be federally sentenced later.

**Oneatha Swinton (Staten Island).** A high school principal on Staten Island falsely registered her luxury vehicles in Pennsylvania to illegally pay lower auto premiums than she would’ve in New York. Oneatha Swinton used another person’s Pennsylvania address while living and working on Staten Island. She illegally saved $3,000 a year in auto premiums by exploiting lower Pennsylvania premiums.

**Painful diagnosis.** Handing out nearly 4 million addictive pain pills to patients who didn’t need them, Dr. Lazar Feygin flooded the streets in a $6.3-million insurance scheme. Feygin also subjected patients to unneeded medical tests and physical therapy fraudulently billed to Medicare and Medicaid.

**Clinic con.** James “Jay” and Jeffrey Spina (Middletown) ran medical clinics that stole $80 million from auto insurers, Medicare and health insurers in bogus claims. The clinics double-billed, billed for phantom treatments and forged medical records.

**Deadly deceit.** Broke and aimless from a backgammon addiction, Rod Covlin strangled his wealthy wife Shele Danishefsky in her Manhattan luxury apartment for $1.6 million of life insurance, plus other assets. Covlin made Shele’s death look like an accidental fall in her bathtub. He received 25 years to life in state prison.

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