

DEADLINE DETROIT

cityscape

Class Action Lawsuit Accuses Another Detroit-Area 'Dr. Evil' of False Diagnoses



By Alan Stamm

November 6th, 2016

This medical nightmare is familiar locally: A doctor falsely claimed that hundreds of patients have a serious disease, according to a lawsuit.

Health care reporter Jay Greene reports on the case at Crain's Detroit Business blog in a magazine-length blog post that exceeds 2,100 words:

Depositions are underway for a potential jury trial next year for Yasser Awaad, M.D., a pediatric neurologist formerly with Oakwood Hospital and Medical Center in Dearborn who is accused in a class action lawsuit of falsely diagnosing epilepsy in hundreds of children in Southeast Michigan in the mid-2000s.

Awaad has been compared by the attorneys of the children and their families to Farid Fata, M.D., the Crittenton Hospital-based oncologist who has been jailed and fined for health care fraud in misdiagnosing

cancer patients.

Attorneys for Awaad and Oakwood have denied all allegations against the Egyptian-born doctor.



Pediatric neurologist Yasser Awaad worked at the Dearborn hospital from 2005-07.

No criminal prosecution is involved, unlike in the nationally covered case of Dr. Fata, dubbed "Dr. Evil" in media reports. The former physician, now 51, was arrested in 2013 and convicted by jurors in mid-2015 of Medicare fraud for over-treating, misdiagnosing or under-treating more than 550 patients so could receiver more than \$17 million in fees. He's serving a 45-year prison term.

Dr. Awaad, 62, has been licensed since 1994 and served his medical residency in Detroit at Children's Hospital of Michigan and worked at Oakwood from 2005-07. He's now medical education consultant at Beaumont Health in Royal Oak, which "restricts him from direct patient care," according to Crain's.

Greene's deeply reported account describes the legal filing on behalf of 247 families:

According to the class action lawsuit in Wayne County Circuit Court, Awaad advised hundreds of children they had epilepsy and needed to undergo a variety of unnecessary treatments and procedures, and many were prescribed strong anti-epileptic medicine with which they had negative side-effects.

Specialists who have reviewed the cases have stated in sworn affidavits that they found some of Awaad's diagnoses and treatments to be dubious or unnecessary, according to the lawsuit.

Awaad left Detroit in 2007 for the Middle East "while allegations of poor patient care were swirling," the blog post, says and came back two years ago.



Dr. Awaad's Oakwood salary of \$250,000 "swelled to more than \$600,000 as he hit patient volume incentive targets," Crain's reports.

The reporter, whose two requests to interview the defendant's lawyer were unanswered, speaks with Brian McKeen, a downtown Detroit medical malpractice attorney who's co-counsel for the families seeking damages. He writes:

McKeen told Crain's that Awaad, Beaumont and Oakwood have not been especially forthcoming in helping him and families understand what happened to their misdiagnosed children. . . .

"This guy came to Oakwood (in 2005), bragged about a huge practice in epilepsy at Children's Hospital and laid out an unrealistic plan to generate revenue," McKeen said. "(Oakwood) put him in business with an incentive-laden contract tied to billing, and business shot through the roof."

McKeen . . . said more than 2,000 children were treated by Awaad during about a four-year period. . . . "[He] diagnoses everybody [98 percent] as having epilepsy whether they had it or not."

Some children suffered from seizures, other lesser medical issues or were just sleep deprived, the lawyer tells Greene.

A 2010 People magazine report on the case is headline "**Medical Nightmare: Misdiagnosed for Greed?**"