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Broward doctor, two others charged in billing scheme

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A South Florida doctor and two other healthcare professionals were indicted Thursday on charges of Medicare fraud stemming from an alleged \$55 million scheme to fleece the taxpayer-funded program.

The defendants are the latest to be charged in the long-running case of a Miami Gardens clinic, Biscayne Milieu, which has resulted in the convictions of more than 25 employees and associates since 2011.

Charged with conspiring to defraud Medicare: Salo Shapiro, 69, a Broward doctor; Marlene Cesar, 63, a former Miami nurse; and Sonia Gallimore, 73, a Broward mental-health counselor.

According to authorities, the defendants and their co-conspirators submitted \$55 million dollars in false claims through Biscayne Milieu, which purported to provide intensive treatment for severe mental illness. Medicare paid the clinic \$11 million.

The three defendants schemed to admit ineligible Medicare beneficiaries and to bill the program for sham therapy sessions that were never provided, prosecutor James Hayes said. Many of the patients were ineligible because they were chronic substance abusers, suffered from severe dementia and could not benefit from group therapy.

Some of the patients had no psychological diagnosis, Hayes said, but they went to Biscayne Milieu so they could qualify for mental-health exemptions on their U.S. citizenship applications.