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**Doctor, Wife Convicted of Fraud at Clinic**

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A Huntington Park doctor was convicted Thursday of filing false Medi-Cal claims and allowing unlicensed workers to practice medicine and dispense narcotics in a facility that specialized in caring for walk-in patients.

The Norwalk Superior Court jury found Dr. Suresh Gandotra, 50, guilty of all 17 charges against him, which included forgery, furnishing dangerous drugs and letting unlicensed people tend to patients at the Coast Urgent Care Medical Clinic at 5725 Soto St. in Huntington Park.

His wife, Rita Gandotra, 39, was found guilty of all five charges against her, which included grand theft and conspiracy to file false claims.

The couple face up to six years in prison and $25,000 in fines, and they may have to pay up to $700,000 in restitution to the state.



Norwalk Superior Court Judge Charles Frisco set sentencing for May 2.

Among those who testified for the prosecution, headed by Deputy Atty. Gen. Richard Rojo, were three employees of the clinic who were originally charged along with the doctor and his wife.

But all three later pleaded guilty and their cases were separated from those of the Gandotras. The three were Carlos Cuellar, 34, Ricardo Santos, 36, and Shirley Riles, 41.

The attorney general's office began investigating Gandotra in 1987 when a state audit of Medi-Cal claims and payments revealed that the doctor was using unlicensed employees in his clinic to treat patients and to write prescriptions for such drugs as Valium and codeine.

Undercover investigators were sent to the clinic, and in 1988, clinic records were seized.

In addition to documenting that unlicensed people were practicing medicine and filing Medi-Cal claims, investigators also found that Medi-Cal claims were being made for services that had not been performed.

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