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Posted October 9, 2015 - 7:02pm

Woman says a visit to 'doctor' was a nightmare on Monroe Avenue



Rick Van Thiel, booked at Clark County Detention Center for charges including acting as a medical practitioner without a license, and possessing a gun by a prohibited person, speaks during an interview in Las Vegas on Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2015. Chase Stevens/Las Vegas Review-Journal

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By Wesley Juhl
Las Vegas Review-Journal

A woman who sought medical treatment by Rick Van Thiel says she went to police after a nightmarish experience at his unlicensed clinic.

Las Vegas Susan Stio said she went to Van Thiel about three years ago, when she was having trouble sleeping.

"I decided I wanted to find a holistic solution," she said.

Stio said she was referred to Van Thiel by a cashier at a health food store who said the man was distributing business cards advertising his services as a natural healer to store employees.

Van Thiel, 52, now faces one count each of acting as a medical practitioner without a license, possession of a gun by a prohibited person, possession of drugs and issuing drugs without a prescription. Authorities say they have identified at least 108 patients listed in his medical records, and are looking for more.

Van Thiel in a jail interview Tuesday said he treated people for cancer and HIV, among other serious illnesses.

The Southern Nevada Health District, the Metropolitan Police Department and the FBI are investigating his practice, which was based in a residential area at 4928 E. Monroe Ave., near the intersection of Owens Avenue and Nellis Boulevard.

Stio said she was expecting an office, but when her boyfriend dropped her off at Van Thiel's address she saw a gated compound with large surveillance towers. Van Thiel came out and walked her through a gate in the back of the home.

Stio said she immediately began to get a weird feeling in her stomach and wished her boyfriend had stayed with her. There were multiple trailers in the backyard and clutter everywhere. She said people were sitting around, drinking beer and smoking cigarettes, in what looked like a campground.

"I was scared," she said. "A million things were crossing my mind. I'm like freaking out inside. It looked like something out of a horror movie."

The inside of Van Thiel's trailer was just as bad: there were books and equipment everywhere. Stio said she saw dirty syringes, something that looked like a dialysis machine and bags of blood lying out on the counter. She said Van Thiel bragged about having cured his own cancer as well other people's.

"I knew he wasn't a doctor," she said.

Her anxiety increased when three other people entered the trailer. She watched Van Thiel give a man an injection, and the other people, whom she believed lived in trailers in the yard, began telling her how great of a doctor Van Thiel is. One told her Van Thiel cured his cancer, and another said he fixed her teeth, Stio said.

"In the meantime, he's insisting to let me let him inject me with B12," she said of a common vitamin. "I wasn't letting him inject me with anything."

Stio said she ran out as soon as her boyfriend returned for her. She called Las Vegas police and told the story to a detective, but heard nothing more until news accounts of the Sept. 30 raid of the unlicensed clinic by police and FBI agents. Van Thiel was arrested Oct. 1.

A five-time convicted felon, Van Thiel espouses anti-government rhetoric in line with the sovereign citizens movement. He has said that he has studied medicine for 28 years and doesn't need a government-issued license to practice.

Stio said she's concerned that people in hopeless situations were tricked by Van Thiel. She said she thinks the world is a safer place with him behind bars.

"I feel thankful my situation wasn't so serious. I wasn't in such a desperate situation that I was thinking unclearly," Stio said. "It's so sad. Because these people have terminal illnesses, they want to be healed so badly they put their faith in a psycho."

Arrest records say Van Thiel set up three Websites and Craigslist ads in Nevada, Arizona and Utah to advertise his services. Van Thiel advertised a solution to incurable diseases and viral infections, including HIV, hepatitis and cancer. Websites offered abortions, castrations, circumcisions, electromagnetic therapy and ozone therapy. A witness told police that Van Thiel offered her a D and C, a gynecological procedure on the uterine lining.

The websites contain multiple photos of Van Thiel naked, and a picture of a woman receiving an IV treatment. On his YouTube channel, Van Thiel can be seen performing multiple cyst removals while in various states of undress. One video received more than a million views.

The owner of the Monroe Avenue property, Brad Resnik, was aware of what was happening there, according to court documents. Authorities said he was illegally selling surveillance equipment, and was arrested for the aggravated stalking of an ex-girlfriend Thursday, according to Clark County Detention Center logs.

Resnik appears in one of Van Thiel's YouTube videos, having a cyst removed.

In one video Van Thiel said he is not a surgeon but learned how to do cyst removals by watching other YouTube videos.

"You'd be surprised what you can learn on YouTube," he said in the video.

Anyone who received services at the Monroe Avenue facility can call 1-800-506-1435 or report online at www.fbi.gov. Information obtained as part of this investigation will be handled in accord with medical privacy laws, investigating agencies said.

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