



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

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**FORMER MANHATTAN COSMETIC SURGERY CLINIC OWNER EXTRADITED
FROM CANADA PLEADS GUILTY IN MANHATTAN FEDERAL COURT TO
DEFRAUDING HEALTH INSURANCE COMPANIES OF MORE THAN \$900,000**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that ARTHUR KISSEL, a/k/a "Arthur Froom," a former cosmetic surgery clinic owner, pleaded guilty today in Manhattan federal court to a scheme to defraud health insurance companies of more than \$900,000.

According to the Indictment to which KISSEL pleaded guilty; the evidence at the 2000 trial of KISSEL's wife, SONIA LAFONTAINE, in the case; and statements made during KISSEL's September 2008 bail hearing and today's guilty plea proceeding before United States District Judge DENNY CHIN:

KISSEL and LAFONTAINE owned and operated LaFontaine Rish Medical Associates, a cosmetic surgery clinic located at 315 West 57th Street in Manhattan. LAFONTAINE -- who had no medical license and was not acting under a physician's supervision -- performed procedures which were billed as having been performed by licensed physicians. KISSEL and LAFONTAINE's clinic also billed cosmetic procedures, such as "tummy-tucks" and liposuction, in the guise of medically necessary procedures, such as hernia repairs and lesion removals. They also submitted claims to insurance companies for procedures that were never performed, and exaggerated insurance claims by increasing the number and complexity of procedures that were actually performed.

KISSEL and LAFONTAINE were originally indicted in March 1998. At that time, KISSEL was in Canada where he and his wife ran another cosmetic surgery clinic. LAFONTAINE was arrested in the United States in 1998 and was found guilty on all charges on July 12, 2000, following a six-week jury trial. She was ultimately sentenced to ten years in prison. The United States initiated extradition proceedings against KISSEL in 2000, which resulted in his August 2008 return from Canada on these charges.

KISSEL, 55, pleaded guilty today to one count of conspiracy to commit mail fraud and health care fraud, and one count of mail fraud. He faces a maximum sentence of 5 years in prison on each count; a maximum fine of the greater of \$250,000 or twice the gross gain or loss resulting from the crime on each count; and forfeiture of the proceeds of his crimes. KISSEL is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge CHIN on December 15, 2009 at 2:30 p.m.

Mr. BHARARA praised the outstanding investigative work of the United States Postal Inspection Service and the Federal Bureau of Investigation in this case.

This case is being handled by the Office's Major Crimes Unit. Assistant United States Attorney ROBIN W. MOREY is in charge of the prosecution.

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