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U.S.

## Florida Cardiologist in Medicare Case Files for Bankruptcy

Doctor and practice seek protection amid civil litigation



Dr. Asad Qamar, shown in a video posted Jan. 9, 2015, on YouTube in which he defends his practice against fraud allegations, has sought bankruptcy protection.

*By Christopher Weaver*

Updated April 21, 2016 6:20 pm ET

A Florida cardiologist who was among the highest-billing doctors in the Medicare program in recent years—and the target of a civil lawsuit by the Justice Department last year—filed for bankruptcy protection, court records show.

Medicare paid Asad Qamar, the Ocala, Fla., cardiologist \$16 million in 2013 and \$18.3 million in 2012, according to billing records released by the federal Medicare agency after a legal effort by The Wall Street Journal, placing him among the top handful of medical providers by payments in each of those years.

Dr. Qamar's personal liabilities were valued between \$10 million and \$50 million, and his assets were also in that range, according to one of four bankruptcy filings Wednesday by the doctor and his business entities. His practice, the Institute for Cardiovascular Excellence, in a separate

filing disclosed liabilities of \$10 million to \$50 million as well, and less than \$50,000 in assets. The initial court filings didn't include a detailed breakdown of those debts or assets.

Aaron Wernick, an attorney representing Dr. Qamar and his business interests in the Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceedings, said Dr. Qamar "will try to pay all creditors in full [and] will try to reach a mutually satisfactory resolutions with all parties."

Mr. Wernick, of Furr & Cohen PA in Boca Raton, said "the medical care that Dr. Qamar is providing is very important to the community, and [bankruptcy proceedings] will ensure that the critical medical care continues" by providing an opportunity for Dr. Qamar to resolve pending and potential disputes.

The filings come a week after a federal court ordered mediation in the civil case with the federal Justice Department. In early 2015, federal lawyers said they had joined a whistleblower lawsuit against the doctor alleging he billed the Medicare program for inserting stents in patients that weren't medically necessary.

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The vast majority of Dr. Qamar's Medicare payments, the billing records showed, were for procedures such as inserting stents in or removing plaque from leg arteries. The case alleged, among other things, that Dr. Qamar had inserted a leg stent in a patient who had a life-threatening blockage in her heart, but no medical need for a leg stent. The suit said the patient had died as a result of complications from the unneeded procedure.

In court filings, Dr. Qamar has denied many of the allegations.

The Medicare agency also revoked his payments in 2015.

A lawyer representing Dr. Qamar in the federal civil case and in his dispute with the Medicare agency, Kirk Ogrosky, a former deputy chief of the Justice Department's health fraud division, didn't respond to request for comment.

A spokeswoman for the Justice Department declined to comment, and a spokesman for the Medicare agency declined to comment.

Jonathan Kroner, a lawyer representing one of the whistleblowers in the federal case, said Dr. Qamar "is out of business as a Medicare provider for all practical purposes, which is a good thing for beneficiaries and the taxpayer."

Mr. Wernick said Dr. Qamar's practice remains open and continues to treat patients. He declined to comment on whether it was accepting Medicare patients.

—*Katy Stech contributed to this article.*

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