

Washington sues plastic surgery provider for fake reviews | AP News

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PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — A Seattle-area plastic surgery provider is facing a federal lawsuit for allegedly posting fake positive reviews online and intimidating or bribing patients to remove negative reviews, Washington state prosecutors said Thursday.

Attorney General Bob Ferguson’s office says Allure Esthetic and its owner, Dr. Javad Sajan, misled patients and the public “through a multitude of unlawful, unfair and deceptive practices.” The company allegedly directed its employees to create fake email accounts in order to write and post fictitious positive reviews on sites including Google and Yelp.

Allure threatened to sue patients if they refused to delete negative reviews, the [lawsuit](#) says. Other times, it offered patients cash and free services or products to take down negative reviews. The practice also had more than 10,000 patients sign nondisclosure agreements before receiving treatment that restricted them from posting negative reviews online, the suit says.

Allure performs surgical and non-surgical treatments ranging from Botox to gender-affirming procedures, the release said.

“Threatening and bribing customers to prevent them from sharing the truth about their experience isn’t just wrong — it’s illegal,” Ferguson said in a [news release](#). “Patients rely on reviews to determine if a healthcare provider is right for them, and using legal threats and bribes to manipulate those reviews is deceptive and harms Washingtonians.”

Allure didn’t immediately respond to an emailed request for comment. When called by an Associated Press reporter on Thursday, a person answering the phone for the company hung up three times.

A version of the NDA used from 2017 to 2019 also required defendants to agree to waive health privacy rights, stating they must allow the provider to include personal health information in responses to negative posts, the lawsuit alleges.

Some patients said they weren’t informed of the agreement and didn’t know they had signed it, as it

was given to them in a thick stack of pre-procedure paperwork that had to be completed before receiving treatment.

Victoria Hester said she made an appointment with Sajan in 2021 for a gender-affirming procedure based on positive reviews online. Speaking through tears at a news conference Friday alongside Ferguson, Hester said the appointment ended up causing “long-lasting trauma,” describing the doctor’s examination of her body as “demeaning.” Sajan refused to perform the procedure, Hester said.

“I wrote a negative review because of the way he scrutinized my body and humiliated me in his office,” Hester said. Soon after, Allure called and threatened legal action.

“I had never heard of signing this NDA. And I had never known that a practice would require this, to try to keep people from sharing their experience,” Hester said. “I posted my negative review because I wanted other transgender and gender-nonconforming patients to be aware of what I experienced.”

Allure considered anything under four stars a negative review, according to the lawsuit.

From 2017 to 2022, Allure had patients sign “pre-service” nondisclosure agreements that required them to contact the company with any concerns instead of posting about it online in a negative review.

Some patients who posted negative reviews were contacted by Allure with offers of cash or free services and products in exchange for removing their post. Patients who accepted the offer were then required to sign a second NDA obliging them to remove the review and refrain from posting negative reviews in the future under threat of a \$250,000 fine, the lawsuit alleges.

The lawsuit cites former employees who said they were directed to create Gmail accounts with stock photos for profile pictures and use them to review other businesses in the Seattle area, including Applebee’s restaurants and Pennzoil oil changes locations, in order to impersonate a real consumer and avoid detection by online review platforms.

Allure also directed employees to edit “before and after” photos to make the results of its procedures look more flattering, according to the lawsuit.

Allure Esthetic does business under several names, including Alderwood Surgical Center, Gallery of Cosmetic Surgery, Seattle Plastic Surgery, Northwest Nasal Sinus Center, and Northwest Face & Body, according to the lawsuit.

Ferguson filed the lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington.

This story has been updated to correct the name of the plastic surgery provider’s owner. He is Dr.

Javad Sajan, not Dr. Javad Savan.