

# CCHR: Unlawful Imprisonment of Patients Exposes Mental Health Coercion & Fraud

*Watchdog says recent exposure of mental health patients being imprisoned exemplifies how forced treatment & fraudulent billing are used in mental health system*

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Mental health industry watchdog, [Citizens Commission on Human Rights \(CCHR\) International](#) says recent allegations

that an Arkansas psychiatrist imprisoned nearly 100 patients in a behavioral health unit and forced treatment on them exemplify the systemic coercion and fraud that is found in today's mental health systems.[1] Patients state they were locked in the behavioral unit so their insurance could be overbilled.[2] According to the Arkansas State Attorney General's office, the psychiatrist is accused of running an insurance scam and billing Medicaid at "the highest severity code on every patient," according to a search warrant affidavit.[3]



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*Dr. Peter Gøtzsche,  
Researcher*

Channel 5 News in Arkansas reported that a federal investigation found evidence that the psychiatrist had not even entered patients' rooms despite filing in-depth reports on their health into their medical records to justify Medicaid payments.[4] The New York Post reported on video footage showing him touring hospital hallways without spending any time with patients.[5]

Under his leadership, the behavioral unit bed numbers

went from 25 to 75 and Medicaid and Medicare claims rocketed, earning the psychiatrist \$1,367

a day, according to the Arkansas Attorney General.[6] From January 2019 through June 2022, Medicaid paid out more than \$800,000 to the unit.[7]

Federal officials claim that between January 1, 2019, and May 2022, 99.95% of the psychiatrist's claims for Medicaid were for the highest level of patient severity — and therefore the highest reimbursement rate — without seeing those patients face-to-face. This is compared to only about 21% of doctors across the country billing Medicaid for the highest code.[8]

In April 2023, the hospital agreed to repay \$1.1 million to the state Medicaid program in a settlement agreement in which they denied any wrongdoing.[9] The settlement was the latest development in the Medicaid fraud investigation.[10]

According to the Daily Mail, nearly 100 former patients of the behavioral health unit are now filing lawsuits against the psychiatrist and the behavioral unit. The lawsuits start by saying: "This case arises from the concerted actions of the above-named defendants to prey on, coerce, abuse, and unlawfully hold patients...in order to fraudulently bill their private health insurance, Medicare, Medicaid, or other applicable insurance coverage for alleged care and treatment that was not provided." [11]

NBC News featured an interview with a former behavioral unit patient, who last year was kept in the facility against his will and had to obtain a court order to secure his release. A sheriff's deputy had walked into the hospital with the order and escorted the patient safely out of the facility. According to court records, the patient's release had marked the second time in two months that a patient was released from the unit only after a sheriff's deputy showed up with a court order.[12]

The Daily Mail investigation detailed patient abuse while being falsely imprisoned. One behavioral unit victim was forcibly held for five days, and said, "They sent in four nurses, techs and they each grabbed my arms and my legs and held me down on my stomach and shot me up with a sedative." [13]

The behavioral health unit's use of coercion and forced treatment demonstrates how psychiatric facilities continue to employ these abusive practices despite admonishments from the World Health Organization and the United Nations. In 2021, the World Health Organization published its "Guidance on Community Mental Health Services: Promoting Person-Centered and Rights-Based Approaches" which condemned coercive psychiatric practices that are increasingly used, "despite the lack of evidence that they offer any benefits and the significant evidence that they lead to physical and psychological harm and even death." [14]

In 2022, the Annual Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights found that "countries needed to scale up investment in rights-based mental health services, including services that were free from coercion, including forced admission and treatment." [15]

Even as far back as 2015, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities called for the complete elimination of forced treatment practices, which include seclusion and various forms of physical, chemical, and mechanical restraints. The Committee's findings classified these practices as tantamount to torture, emphasizing the urgency of abolishing such harmful approaches to mental health care. The stories of those treated in the Arkansas psychiatric unit underscore the importance of advocating for humane practices in the mental health field.[16]

Researcher Dr. Peter Gøtzsche determined: "It has never been shown that forced treatment does more good than harm, and it is highly likely that the opposite is true." [17]

Yet involuntary commitment and forced treatment are pervasive in the U.S. The rates of forced detainment vary depending on state laws. A 2019 study published in *Psychiatric Services* reported that in the U.S. between 2011 and 2018, involuntary psychiatric detentions increased three times faster than the population growth in those states for which involuntary commitment data was available. The largest increases were in Nevada (139.2%) and Indiana (102.7%) over an 8-year period and in Colorado (88.6%) over 6 years.[18] In North Carolina during the last decade, there's been a 91% increase in the use of involuntary commitment.[19]

All of this is evidence and substantiation for why governments need to follow World Health Organization guidelines to abolish coercive psychiatric practices, CCHR says.[20]

As Dr. Gøtzsche further points out: "Forced treatment in psychiatry cannot be defended, neither on ethical, legal or scientific grounds" because "It is a myth that psychiatrists need access to forced treatment." [21]

CCHR says that any psychiatrist or behavioral facility using such coercion and/or fraudulent billing practices needs to be held accountable and outlawing forced treatment is needed to protect patients from being harmed.

[Read full article here.](#)

[1] <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/top-arkansas-psychiatrist-accused-falsely-imprisoning-patients-medicaid-rcna93430>

[2] <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12345047/Psychiatrist-Brian-Hyatt-huge-goons-hospital-bully-NBA-player-Isaiah-Morris.html>

[3] <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/top-arkansas-psychiatrist-accused-falsely-imprisoning-patients-medicaid-rcna93430>

[4] <https://www.5newsonline.com/article/news/crime/search-warrant-executed-rogers-psychiatrist-medicaid-fraud/527-9a31cf79-2669-4535-891c-668048739f51>

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- [6] <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12330353/Arkansas-psychiatrist-held-patients-ran-insurance-scam.html>
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