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The carriage house in Newark where the remains of investment banker Maria Cruz were found Wednesday encased in concrete.

AP Photo



AP Photo

Police are checking whether Maria Cruz died during surgery performed by Dean Farello.



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Laser Procedure Probed

Police checking if fugitive performed surgery that killed woman

By Daryl Khan
and Lindsay Faber

STAFF WRITERS

Police are investigating the possibility that Maria Cruz, the financial analyst missing since April, died in a Chelsea apartment during a laser removal procedure performed by a charlatan posing as a doctor.

Dean Faiello, the man whom police want to question about the procedure, was on probation for practicing medicine without a license when he allegedly treated Cruz at a friend's apartment. Investigators say they believe Faiello, who remains a fugitive, is in Costa Rica. Detectives were reviewing the extradition treaty last night.

Police found Cruz's remains Wednesday in a concrete grave on Faiello's former property in New Jersey. Investigators say they believe the grave was constructed on May 27, the day before Faiello sold the property.

Cruz had been seeking treatment for black tongue, a condition in which hair-like growths sprout from the tongue as a reaction to antibiotics, her family said. She died from a misapplication of anesthesia, sources said.

A doctor who shared a building on East 18th Street at the time Faiello worked there in the basement suite said he almost fainted when he heard of Faiello's possible connection to Cruz's death.

"He was a really charming guy and his patients seemed to like him," said the doctor, who wanted to remain anonymous. "Even after all of this happened, a lot of patients would still come in here asking for Doctor Dean."

The doctor, who said he didn't want his name and office associated with Faiello, took away Faiello's office keys in October 2002 when he was charged and never saw him again. But former

patients called with concerns.

"Patients of his called here and told us he told them to come see him in his house in New Jersey," he said. "He told me that he never told anyone that he was a doctor . . . that he just did hair."

On April 11, Cruz had an appointment with Faiello, but worked late at Barclays Capital and had to reschedule for April 13.

"Last time she was seen alive was Sunday, April 13, when she went to Mass," said Paul Browne, a police spokesman.

Browne said that on that day Cruz made a purchase at a Duane Reade on Broadway and at 1:30 p.m. withdrew cash from an ATM at her office. Browne said investigators saw footage from a camera at the ATM of Cruz by herself

making the withdrawal. After that she made a purchase at Loehmann's at the corner of Seventh Avenue and West 16th Street.

"Walking distance from the friend's apartment where we believe Faiello performed these procedures," Browne said.

Family notified police that Cruz was missing when she failed to pick them up at Kennedy Airport.

"I don't even want to say what I want about him and have it be published," said Cruz's uncle, Jose Navarro, of Maspeth, a tremor of anger burning in his voice. "We're just so devastated right now."

He said he and the rest of Cruz's family — three sisters, a brother and her parents who are arriving in the city to-

morrow from the Philippines — hope Faiello stops running from the law and from his conscience.

"I hope he realizes what he has done and stops doing it," he said. "He should turn himself in — if he wants to have his conscience clear."

Tom Shanahan, an attorney for Faiello in a civil matter, said he has recently spoken to Faiello, but would not specify when.

"I was surprised by what I read in the paper this morning," he said. "It's a horrible situation."

He declined to comment on whether he was arranging for Faiello to surrender.

Staff writer Sean Gardiner contributed to this story.

Bogus Doctors on the Rise

By Luis Perez

STAFF WRITER

The discovery of a Manhattan investment banker's body in a suitcase in New Jersey on Wednesday underscores a gaping hole in cosmetic surgery — the proliferation of unlicensed operators.

That's because state health and licensing officials only hear about bogus cosmetic surgeons when patients or other doctors file a formal complaint.

At the same time, such surgical and non-surgical cosmetic procedures as liposuction, hair removal and Botox injections are soaring, luring the unsuspecting into shadowy clinics or overseas.

Dr. Harvey Wachsman, a Manhattan physician and author of "Lethal Medicine: The Epidemic of Medical Malpractice in America," says that means patients have to be careful because some people offering cosmetic procedures are only looking to make a fast buck, with little concern for the patient.

"If they do it the right way, they'll do it in a hospital," he said. "The chance of something going wrong in a stand-alone clinic is so much greater."

From 2001 to 2003, the state Department of Education,

which issues medical licenses, received 193 tips about clinics performing illegal cosmetic work, department spokesman Jonathan Burman said.

Many of those complaints were passed on to law-enforcement agencies, Burman said.

That is how authorities were tipped off to Dean Faiello, who is a suspect in the death of Maria Cruz, the Manhattan investment banker. Police suspect Cruz, 35, went to Faiello to have hair removed from her tongue and may have died from a botched application of anesthesia.

Wachsman said misapplication of anesthesia is the most common mistake made during many unlicensed procedures. A patient can be given too much anesthesia, he said, or the breathing tube may be placed in the trachea instead of the esophagus, causing the person to choke.

Non-surgical procedures, such as Botox, used to remove wrinkles, also carry big risks, doctors said.

People operating without trained assistants sometimes inject it into an artery or vein.

"That can lead to paralysis," said Dr. Thomas Romo, director of facial plastic surgery at Lenox Hill Hospital in Manhattan. "It can lead to blindness."

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LATE CITY FINAL

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Ex-boyfriend sold out quack fugitive

EXCLUSIVE

By BRAD HAMILTON
and PHILIP MESSING

He was ratted out by one ex-boyfriend while living on the insurance money of another.

Suspected killer quack Dean Faiello helped fund his life of luxury on the lam with a \$50,000 payout from the policy of a dead ex-beau, never suspecting that another former flame was telling authorities of Faiello's possible involvement in the death of bank analyst Maria Cruz, sources said.

The fake plastic surgeon's injection of cash came about a month ago, after he

won a long battle with the family of his late lover, Broadway dancer Jason Opsahl, over the stricken man's \$85,000 life insurance policy, law-enforcement sources said.

Opsahl died of an unknown illness at New York Weill Cornell Medical Center in October 2002, naming Faiello as the beneficiary of his policy, but Opsahl's family sued Faiello on April 13, 2003 — the same day Cruz disappeared — to prevent the payout.

Faiello eventually prevailed, then asked his sister, Debbie, a New Jersey state trooper, to follow up on the matter after he bolted for Costa Rica, law-enforcement sources said.

Cops say Debbie Faiello was not involved. She has repeatedly declined to comment on her brother.

Law-enforcement sources said part of the settlement money was wired to Faiello in Costa Rica, where the phony surgeon was living it up in gay hangouts in San Jose and at a swanky beach resort on the Pacific coast.

Faiello phoned an associate in New York to ask that the money be sent, lying that he was merely on an extended holiday to get a break from the city, law-enforcement sources said.

"He just said he was taking a long vacation from his troubles with his business partners," said one source. "He said, 'I'm in the jungle!'"

What Faiello didn't know, sources said, was that another ex-paramour of his in New York had tipped off authorities that something strange had gone on at the \$420,000 Newark home where Faiello once lived.

The second lover had become enraged that Faiello skipped town without paying him back \$80,000 the lover loaned him to make improvements on the house, as well for legal fees and other expenses, sources said.

The lover told cops he'd been the one who purchased several bags of cement and delivered them to Faiello's Newark home, but then was told by Faiello to stay out of the carriage house where, cops say,



JASON OPSAHL
Left insurance \$\$.
Additional reporting by Jeane Machtosh in San Jose, Costa Rica

Faiello was busy entombing Cruz's body under a concrete slab.