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**QUEENS SPA OWNER CHARGED WITH UNLAWFULLY
PRACTICING MEDICINE AND SERIOUSLY INJURING CLIENT**

Allegedly Endangered Patient By Performing Liposuction And Fat Injections; Patient Hospitalized

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown announced today that the owner of a Corona esthetic spa and nutrition center has been charged with unlawfully practicing medicine and endangering the life of a customer by performing liposuction on her stomach and then re-injecting the fat into her buttocks. A week later, the customer sought medical help, underwent life-saving surgery and was hospitalized for five days.

District Attorney Brown said, "The defendant is accused of nearly causing the death of a young woman by performing medical procedures without a license. Her alleged conduct was both dangerous and reprehensible because it exploited the vanity of an individual seeking a more attractive appearance at a reasonable cost and caused her victim to suffer permanent scarring – both physically and emotionally."

District Attorney Brown identified the defendant as Barbara A. Nieto, 27, of 99-05 58th Avenue in Corona, Queens. Nieto, who is licensed to perform appearance enhancement by the New York Department of State, was arraigned on Friday, April 9, 2010, in Queens Criminal Court on charges of second-degree assault, first-degree reckless endangerment and unauthorized practice of medicine. Nieto, who faces up to seven years in prison if convicted, was released on her own recognizance and ordered to return to court on April 27, 2010.

District Attorney Brown noted that appearance enhancement consists of cosmetology, esthetics, nail specialty, natural hair styling and waxing. The District Attorney said that the investigation is continuing and requests other individuals who were treated by the defendant at either Perfect Image Stethics (located at 40-63 Junction Boulevard) or Bell Stetika Esthetics and Spa (located at 93-28A Corona Avenue) to contact his office's Economic Crimes Bureau at 718-286-6673.

The District Attorney said that, according to the criminal charges, 23-year-old Augusta Velez went to Perfect Image for a consultation and was informed by Nieto of procedures that she could perform which would remove fat from her stomach area and then be re-inserted into her buttocks. Nieto allegedly told Ms. Velez that the procedure would cost \$500. Scheduling an appointment, it is alleged that Ms. Velez returned to Perfect Image on the morning of March 20, 2010, and was taken into a room where Nieto wheeled in a machine that was connected with several hoses. Nieto

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allegedly injected Ms. Velez with a substance that was supposed to help with pain and then, cutting an opening in her stomach area, used the machine to suction fat from her stomach area. It is similarly alleged that Nieto injected Ms. Velez in the buttocks with a supposed pain relieving substance and then, making two incisions, reinserted the fat into her buttocks. Once Nieto allegedly completed the medical procedures by stitching up the holes in Ms. Velez's stomach area and buttocks, Nieto allegedly informed Ms. Velez that she would need follow-up massage sessions.

It is further alleged that several days after having the procedure performed, Ms. Velez began to feel severe pain and developed a high fever, which continued for several days. Finding it difficult to walk, Ms. Velez went on March 27, 2010, to Flushing Hospital, where she was diagnosed with bilateral buttock abscesses and underwent surgery. She remained hospitalized for five days. It is alleged that if Ms. Velez did not seek treatment, she would have developed a septic infection which would have led to death.

The District Attorney expressed his appreciation to Dr. Don Weiss, of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Bureau of Communicable Disease Control, and Donald Dawson, Deputy Director of Investigations for the New York State Department of Education's Office of Professional Discipline.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Joseph Failla of the New York City Police Department's Major Case Squad, under the supervision of Sergeant Branko Yurisac and Lieutenant Christopher Stahly and under the overall supervision of Inspector Charles Neacy.

Assistant District Attorney Allison P. Wright, of the District Attorney's Economic and Environmental Crimes Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Gregory C. Pavlides, Bureau Chief, and Christina Hanophy, Deputy Chief, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Peter A. Crusco and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Linda M. Cantoni.

It should be noted that criminal charges are merely an accusation and that defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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