

Sunday Star-Ledger

7SS11

STATE EDITION

TODAY'S FORECAST: Dry and cool with intervals of clouds and sun.

at 7 A.M.

30°

at 2 P.M.

50°

at 7 P.M.

42°

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NOVEMBER 5, 2006

\$1.50

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THE NEWSPAPER FOR NEW JERSEY

How UMDNJ pumped up its heart program

Allegations of kickbacks center on hospital's ailing cardiac unit

BY TED SHERMAN AND JOSH MARGOLIN
STAR-LEDGER STAFF

They were given prestigious, high-paying faculty appointments at the state's medical university, but did not teach class.

Touted as leaders in the field of cardiology, few had research credentials and two had failed their cardiology boards — more than once

And they were hired even though some administrators worried that the plan was illegal.

Skirting federal law that forbids kickbacks for patient referrals, the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey paid at least nine local cardiologists in private practice salaries and stipends as high as \$150,000 to become “clinical assistant

professors” in an effort to increase the number of patients in the university's troubled heart surgery program.

Despite the faculty appointments and contracts that spelled out a range of services they were expected to perform, the doctors did not spend much time at UMDNJ or its teaching hospital in Newark. The details of this unusual program

emerge from sworn testimony taken in a whistle-blower lawsuit against the school, interviews with former and current UMDNJ employees and internal documents obtained by The Star-Ledger through the Open Public Records Act.

The cardiologists did not give lectures and seldom would attend rounds, as did other members of the medical faculty, one former administrator said. Their only real responsibility, according to documents and

interviews, was to refer their patients to UMDNJ's University Hospital in Newark to boost the number of cases in a cardiac surgery program the state was threatening to shut down for poor performance.

Some university officials voiced concern over the criminal implications of the faculty appointments, and the possibility that they could lead to prison sentences under federal anti-kickback laws, or civil penalties under the federal Stark Law that could

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