

Suit over sex abuse at KS VA hospital goes to trial

KANSAS CITY, Kan. (AP) — A lawsuit against a Veterans Affairs hospital in Kansas where a former physician assistant molested countless patients involves “the largest sexual abuse scandal in the history of the VA,” a lawyer for one of the victims told a federal judge Tuesday.

“Countless veterans have never gotten their day in court, have never gotten justice,” attorney Daniel A. Thomas said in opening statements. “And more importantly, not a single person from the VA has ever been held accountable.”

KCUR-FM reported the lawsuit being tried via Zoom video conference before U.S. District Judge Daniel D. Crabtree will determine whether the federal government is liable for the actions of Mark Wisner, who is serving a 15-year prison sentence for sexual battery and sodomy.

Wisner was convicted in 2017, and the government does not dispute that he sexually molested veterans by conducting unnecessary genital and rectal exams and prescribing pain medications to make them dependent on him.

“Indeed, all who have heard about these matters cannot help but be outraged,” Justice Department lawyer Larry Eiser said in his opening statement. “A sexual predator in the guise of a health care provider preying upon wounded warriors — outrageous.”

But the government argues it should not be held liable because Wisner’s conduct was outside the scope of his employment and because the damages sought for a lifetime of medical treatment are excessive.

This is the first lawsuit to go to trial against the government over Wisner’s actions. More than 80 of the 100 victims who filed lawsuits against the government settled last year for a total of \$7 million.

The trial, brought by a man identified in court documents only as John Doe, is expected to last through the week.