

Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Gillibrand, and distinguished members of the Senate Special Committee on Aging, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is Dr. David Amron, and I am the Founder and Medical Director of The Roxbury Institute in Los Angeles, California, and the Founder and Chair of The Lipedema Society. For more than three decades, I have dedicated my career to treating patients with lipedema, a chronic and often misunderstood disease that affects millions of women worldwide. I am widely recognized as the pioneer of lipedema surgery in North America and have devoted my career to advancing surgical treatment, educating physicians, and advocating on behalf of patients to help them obtain insurance coverage for their care.

As physicians, trust is the foundation of everything we do. Patients rely on us during some of the most vulnerable moments of their lives. I have spent more than three decades building that trust, yet scammers used artificial intelligence to exploit it in a matter of moments. Although I knew artificial intelligence was rapidly evolving, I never imagined how quickly it could be weaponized to deceive patients until it happened to me.

We first became aware of the scam in the summer of 2025, with reports increasing significantly by early September. Patients began contacting our office after seeing a video that appeared to show me endorsing a so-called "miracle" lipedema cream. Many forwarded us the video, but by then, some had already purchased the product before realizing it was fraudulent, including several of my own patients.

The video was disturbingly realistic. Scammers used actual footage from my YouTube channel and combined it with a fully AI-generated likeness and voice of my colleague, Dr. Karen Herbst, Head of Research and Director of Diagnostic and Preventative Medicine at The Roxbury Institute, as well as AI-generated celebrity images and stolen media logos, to create a polished advertisement that appeared entirely legitimate.

As soon as we recognized it as a coordinated deepfake, my team immediately issued public advisories across our social media platforms to warn patients, clarify that neither Dr. Herbst nor I had any involvement, and help our community recognize and report AI-generated medical impersonations.

Our web developer and digital marketing strategist immediately began investigating the scam as soon as patients alerted us. Before taking action, he investigated the company behind the product, Svelta Venastra, and quickly confirmed it was not a legitimate medical entity. He reported every version of the advertisement to Meta, the fraudulent accounts responsible for publishing it, the domain registrars hosting the websites, and the major search engines directing consumers to the scam. Yet each time one version was removed, another quickly appeared. This continued over the course of eleven days.

Despite these persistent efforts, the scam kept recurring. It quickly became clear that the existing reporting systems were not enough to stop a coordinated AI-enabled fraud campaign. After exhausting every avenue available to us, we realized we needed to bring national attention to what was happening. After exhausting every avenue available to us, we reached out to major television networks because we believed public awareness might accomplish what traditional reporting mechanisms could not. The TODAY Show responded, conducted its own investigation, and ultimately brought the scam to a national audience.

The TODAY Show attempted to identify and contact the individuals behind Svelta Venastra, just as we had. Like us, they found no legitimate company, no accountable representative, and no one willing to respond. Although the fraudulent video was eventually removed, versions of the scam have since resurfaced, underscoring how persistent and difficult these AI-enabled fraud schemes are to eliminate.

What disturbed me most was not that someone had misused my image. It was knowing that scammers had used my name and reputation to deceive the very people I have dedicated my career to helping.

The consequences extend far beyond financial loss. Patients may delay legitimate medical care for a progressive disease like lipedema, place their trust in unproven products and services, and allow their condition to worsen. Perhaps most damaging, these scams erode the trust patients place in their physicians. Once that trust is broken, patients no longer know whom they can trust.

Artificial intelligence has fundamentally changed the landscape of fraud, giving scammers the ability to convincingly impersonate trusted physicians, fabricate endorsements, and deceive patients on an unprecedented scale.

What happened to me is not an isolated incident. Physicians across the country are discovering that their images, voices, and professional reputations are being used without their knowledge or consent to promote products they have never evaluated, recommended, or even heard of.

The danger is clear. These scams put patients at risk and undermine the credibility of the medical profession. Older Americans are especially vulnerable because they often place tremendous trust in their physicians. Many also rely on the internet, including social media and online search results, to learn about medical conditions, making them especially susceptible when fraudulent content appears to come from trusted medical professionals. When they see a realistic online video of a trusted physician recommending a treatment,

they have little reason to question its authenticity. That is precisely what makes today's AI-generated deepfakes such a powerful tool for deception.

This problem is no longer theoretical. It is happening right now, and the consequences for patient safety, medical ethics, and the integrity of healthcare information are profound. If we do not act, more older Americans and other vulnerable patients will become victims of increasingly sophisticated AI-enabled fraud. I respectfully urge Congress to strengthen protections against AI-generated impersonation scams, improve accountability for those who create and distribute them, and ensure our laws keep pace with technology that can so easily be used to exploit trust for financial gain.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to answering your questions.