

# UHC Shooter Luigi Mangione Appears To Have Been A Redditor — And He Researched Back Pain And Backpacks

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perspective.”

Sarah Emerson & Alex Knapp

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UnitedHealthcare shooting suspect Luigi Mangione appears to have been an active Reddit user, posting in communities centered around spinal pain, travel gear and the game Pokémon Go, according to archived comments he is believed to have posted from a now-suspended Reddit account.

Published under the username “Mister\_Cactus,” Mangione’s alleged posts shed additional light on his mindset in the months leading up to the killing of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson, which he has been alleged of perpetrating. On Monday evening, Mangione was charged with murder in New York, along with four additional charges that include illegal gun possession, after being apprehended in Altoona, Pennsylvania.

“When my spondy went bad on me last year (23M) it was completely devastating as a young athletic person,” Mister\_Cactus wrote in a subreddit for spondylolisthesis, a condition where the vertebrae in the spine slip out of place. “Seemingly all I could read on the internet was that I was destined to chronic pain and a desk job for the rest of my life.” They added that the thought “completely destroyed” them until learning about the prospect of spinal fusion surgery, which connects two or more bones in the spine, preventing movement between them that can cause some types of back pain.

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The 26-year-old suspect’s alleged account was surfaced yesterday by a handful of Reddit users who claimed to have recognized Mangione from his posts and comments in r/spondylolisthesis. “I feel like I’ve seen his username in my notifications before this is crazy,” one user remarked. In April this year, Mister\_Cactus had shared advice with the community: “Keep trying different surgeons. ‘Nobody will operate on my back until I’m at least 40’ is nonsense coming from a medical professional who lacks perspective.”

“Tell them you are ‘unable to work’ / do your job,” they added. “We live in a capitalist society. I’ve found that the medical industry responds to these key words far more urgently than you describing unbearable pain and how it’s impacting your quality of life.”

“Plan Z: Fake a footdrop or piss yourself,” they continued. “This is the nuclear option, but there comes a time when it is just ridiculous that people won’t operate on your broken spine.”

After *Forbes* first published this story, the *New York Times* reported that the account was deleted by Reddit, which said that its policy is to suspend accounts that may be connected to “suspects in high-profile criminal investigations.” The user page for Mister\_Cactus only states that the account has been suspended.

Chronic lower back pain can be debilitating for some patients, and it’s the second most common form of disability found in the United States. The pain can often get in the way of every day activities — even walking or standing can eventually become painful for someone with spondylolisthesis. A multitude of studies have found that people with lower back pain suffer mental health issues as well, including anxiety, depression and decreased emotional control. On Reddit, Mangione’s alleged account also described suffering insomnia and gastrointestinal distress.

Mangione's X profile includes an X-ray image of what appears to be the result of a spinal fusion surgery. Former roommates who lived with Mangione in Honolulu, Hawaii several years ago remembered him experiencing chronic back pain, which they attributed to a misaligned vertebrae, Honolulu Civil Beat reported. R.J. Martin, a friend from his days in Hawaii, told the *New York Times* at Mangione's spine was "kind of misaligned," with the lower vertebrae maybe half-inch off. "Sometimes he'd be doing well and other times not," he added. His mother, Kathleen Mangione, reported him missing to the San Francisco police department on November 18, according to the San Francisco Standard.

Archived Reddit posts from April appear to show Mangione's alleged account sharing a packing list for several months of travel throughout Asia. In the r/onebag community, where users swap tips on the best travel gear — often trying to fit all of their items into a single piece of luggage — they wrote that "the constraint of a single bag is a useful practice in intentionality, and it's a good reminder that we're able to go long periods of time without needing many things." Among the gear they recommended were a bag from Tortuga Backpacks, Eagle Creek packing cubes, Under Armour clothing, Ray-Ban sunglasses and North Face hiking boots.

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"Can it get any more minimal than living out of one bag? Maybe," they wrote. "In high school, I was fascinated with the idea of living out of a tin can. Well, not 'living; that way, but being able to survive in the wild using nothing more than a survival kit small enough to fit in an altoids can. The sort of thing, like a first aid kit, that you throw in the trunk of your car. So that in case you get stranded somehow, you could survive for a week or so before rescue."

In the hours following last week's shooting, the suspect was primarily identified by their distinctive gray backpack — a popular camera bag manufactured by Peak Design. A bag matching this design was later found in Central Park containing only a jacket and Monopoly money.

While in college at University of Pennsylvania, Mangione was a smart, unassuming nice guy, a classmate who spoke on condition of not being named told *Forbes*. "He came across as a boyfriend kind of guy," this person said, adding "he's really smart, he's patient, he's always comforting in a positive way." That was before his back problems, something this person, who hadn't stayed in touch with him, was unaware of.

*Additional reporting by Emily Baker-White and Amy Feldman*

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