



UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Acting United States Attorney WILLIAM J. FLANAGAN
Western District of Louisiana

United States Courthouse • 300 Fannin Street, Suite 3201 • Shreveport, Louisiana 71101-3068 • (318) 676-3600
United States Courthouse • 800 Lafayette Street, Suite 2200 • Lafayette, Louisiana 70501-7206 • (337) 262-6618

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Contact: William J. Flanagan (318-676-3600)
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BOSSIER CITY DOCTOR AND TWO OTHERS SENTENCED FOR PRESCRIPTION FRAUD SCHEME

SHREVEPORT, La.: Dr. Tandy McElwee, Jr., 62, of Natchitoches, La., formerly of Bossier City, La., was sentenced today by United States District Judge S. Maurice Hicks, Jr., to five years in prison for his role in a wide-ranging scheme to obtain controlled substances by fraud, Acting United States Attorney William J. Flanagan announced. McElwee also received a \$550,000.00 fine, ordered to serve three years of supervised release at the conclusion of his prison sentence, and ordered to forfeit his medical license through the term of supervised release. McElwee was ordered taken into custody by the U. S. Marshals immediately after sentencing.

Tandy McElwee, his wife Ava Cates McElwee, and Catherine Cockrell were convicted at trial of conspiracy to obtain hydrocodone, a Schedule III controlled substance, by fraud over a three and a half year period from January 2004 through August 2007, by submitting improper prescriptions to pharmacies in the Shreveport-Bossier area in one another's names as well as the names of family members and fictitious names. One prescription was written for an individual named Brandi McElwee, who in fact is one of the McElwee's dogs.

In addition to the conspiracy, Tandy McElwee was sentenced on 19 counts of obtaining or acquiring a controlled substance by fraud, 9 counts of possession of hydrocodone with intent to

distribute, one count of conspiracy to possess hydrocodone with intent to distribute, one count of providing false information in records of dispensed controlled substances, and one count of health care fraud related to fraudulently billing Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana.

Catherine Cockrell, who was convicted of an additional six counts of obtaining or acquiring hydrocodone by fraud, was sentenced today to 3 years supervised probation, including 90 days of home confinement, a \$5,000.00 fine, and \$700.00 to the crime victim fund.

Kristina Randall, 31, of Shreveport, La., pleaded guilty to obtaining a controlled substance by fraud and was sentenced today to 2 years probation.

Wendy Chriss, 33, of Stonewall, La., was sentenced last week to 21 months imprisonment and 3 years of supervised release following her guilty plea to conspiracy to possess hydrocodone with intent to distribute. Chriss was a medical assistant in the office of Tandy W. McElwee, Jr.

Susan Hotard, 54, of Benton, La.; Carla Huff, 37, of Keithville, La.; and Sandra Brannon, 50, of Baton Rouge, La., were each sentenced last week to 3 years of supervised probation and ordered to pay a \$1,000.00 fine. All three plead guilty to one count of obtaining hydrocodone by fraud and testified at trial about the scheme.

Ava McElwee, wife and nurse practitioner employed at Dr. McElwee's office, will be sentenced on January 26, 2010 at 2:30 p.m. on one count of conspiracy to obtain hydrocodone by fraud and one count of obtaining or acquiring hydrocodone by fraud

Acting U. S. Attorney William J. Flanagan stated: "Dr. McElwee, trained in the healing arts, was unfortunately reduced to dispensing illegal drugs under cover of a professional practice, violating the public trust and bringing harm to the community. Reducing the supply of illegal drugs, regardless of the source, remains a major law enforcement priority."

The case was investigated by the Shreveport Offices of the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Allison D. Bushnell and C. Mignonne Griffing.

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