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**PHYSICIAN AND PHARMACIST AMONG THOSE ARRESTED
IN DRUG CONSPIRACY AND HEALTH CARE FRAUD CASE**

PHILADELPHIA - A 498-count indictment¹ was unsealed today charging 53 defendants, including a Montgomery County physician and a Northeast Philadelphia pharmacist, in a multi-million dollar drug conspiracy involving phony prescriptions, phony patients, and an alleged drug trafficking organization. The indictment was announced by United States Attorney Zane David Memeger, Drug Enforcement Administration Special Agent-in-Charge John J. Bryfonski, Department of Health and Human Services Special Agent-in-Charge Nick DiGiulio, and Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Agent-in-Charge George C. Venizelos. In addition to charges of drug possession and drug distribution, the indictment contains 240 counts of health care fraud. Agents from multiple federal and local agencies arrested defendants this morning.

Included in the indictment are Dr. Norman Werther, of Horsham, pharmacist Ihsanullah “Sean” Maaf, of Northeast Pharmacy in Philadelphia, and alleged drug trafficker William Stukes, of Philadelphia. According to the indictment, Stukes and his alleged drug trafficking organization recruited large numbers of pseudo patients and then transported them to Dr. Werther’s medical office for fake examinations. These ‘patients’ paid an office visit fee, usually \$150, to the office staff and Werther would write prescriptions for those ‘patients’ to obtain oxycodone-based drugs without there being a medical need for the prescription. The ‘patients’ were then driven to various pharmacies to have their prescriptions filled, including Northeast Pharmacy where Maaf would fill the prescription. The drugs were then turned over to Stukes or his drivers. Stukes and his organization would allegedly sell the narcotics to numerous drug dealers, who are also named in the indictment, who would also then resell the drugs on the street. It is estimated that between September 2009 and July 2011, the Stukes drug trafficking organization earned more than \$5 million through these illegal prescriptions and that the defendants unlawfully acquired and distributed over 200,000 pills containing oxycodone.

“Doctors and pharmacists are trained to help real patients suffering from actual medical conditions, not drug trafficking organizations,” said Memeger. “Ignoring the clear health risks that Oxycodone presents when introduced into the human body, Dr. Werther and pharmacist Maaf elected to use their medical training to engage in fraud by feeding the habits of drug

¹An Indictment or Information is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

abusers seeking a quick fix. Werther and Maaf are just like the street corner drug dealers they supplied, despite their professional status.”

According to the indictment, pharmacist Ihsanullah Maaf filled Dr. Werther’s illegally obtained prescriptions for the drug trafficking organization and laundered the money he received for his services by structuring his cash bank deposits to avoid federal reporting requirements. Maaf is charged with 119 counts of money laundering, 119 counts of structuring of financial transactions, and one count of aggravated structuring of financial transactions. A forfeiture notice seeks at least \$920,574 in United States currency, representing the amount of property involved in the money laundering conspiracy.

Defendants Rita Myles, Rashida Lyles, and Tina Weisz worked in Dr. Werther’s office and allegedly helped facilitate and verify the prescriptions; defendants Gerald Brinkley and Darrah Robinson allegedly aided Stukes in the running of the drug organization; drivers for the Stukes organization include defendants Herbert Hughes, Carlos Richards, Warren Johnson, Gregory Johnson, Claude Nolan, and Darrell Hendricks; charged as bulk pill buyers are Timothy Peden, Troy Fletcher, Christopher Pizzo, Ato Strong, Sylvester Adams, Jason Romm, James Lyles, and Michael Sanders.

Charged in the indictment as ‘pseudo patients’ are: Zaniah Beard, Donald Brown, Kim Carter, Andre Dawkins, Evette Gringrow, Leon Harris, Denise Hawkins, Ronnie Jackson, Carla Jenkins, Beatrice Lewis, Michael Littlejohn, Vernell McDaniels, Eric Perry, Mark Reid, Michael Rominiecki, Wayne Rucker, Patricia Simmons, Lawrence Stith, Debra Stukes, Viola Stukes, Steven Thompson, Eric Treadwell, Julia Turner, Geraldine Watkins, Yolanda Williams, Lamont Butcher, Khaliff Headen, Sophia Holder, Latoisha Jones, Dawn Little, and Derek Stukes. These 31 pseudo patients are charged with conspiracy to distribute controlled substances and numerous counts of health care fraud.

“This case underscores the magnitude of the prescription drug abuse problem facing the United States today,” said Bryfonski (DEA). “The drugs in this case, when abused, can bring about the same tragic consequences as cocaine and heroin. Even more disturbing, the alleged deception involved suggests that those sworn to treat and administer to the sick can be drawn into a criminal web of drug trafficking for personal gain.”

“The abuse of prescription medications has become a major public health crisis fueled by fraud,” said DiGiulio (HHS-OIG). “All too often prescriptions have no real medical purpose, are fraudulently billed to our health insurance programs, and then sold on the street to drug abusers. Today’s arrests, carried out with our law enforcement partners, are intended to serve justice.”

“Doctors and pharmacists who illegally dispense narcotics and other controlled substances are no different than street corner drug dealers,” said Venizelos (FBI). “These types of health care fraud schemes not only divert limited resources from patients that really need and deserve care, they also endanger people’s lives.”

The crimes of conspiracy, distribution of controlled substance, possession with intent to

distribute, and money laundering each carry a maximum possible sentence of 20 years in prison; health care fraud and aggravated structuring each carry a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison; structuring financial transactions carries a maximum possible sentence of five years in prison. Each defendant also faces possible fines, periods of supervised release, and special assessments.

This case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Office of Inspector General (HHS/OIG), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), with assistance from the Philadelphia Police Department, the North Coventry Police Department and the Upper Moreland Police Department. It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Michelle Rotella and Nancy Beam Winter.

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