



UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

*United States Attorney Donald W. Washington
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

For Immediate Release
December 7, 2006

Contact: Donald W. Washington (337-262-6618)
William J. Flanagan (318-676-3600)

<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/law>

LOCAL PHYSICIAN PLEADS GUILTY IN FEDERAL COURT

*Dr. James Hill agrees to surrender his
medical license as part of plea agreement*

Shreveport, Louisiana . . . DR. JAMES THOMAS HILL, age 59, of Shreveport, pleaded guilty before United States District Judge S. Maurice Hicks, Jr. to charges of drug distribution and health care fraud, United States Attorney Donald W. Washington announced. Sentencing for HILL has been set for March 21, 2007.

HILL, a physician working in the Shreveport area, was indicted in January 2006. The 114-count superseding indictment charges HILL with 32 counts of health care fraud; 80 counts of distribution of controlled substances; 1 count of accessory after the fact; and 1 count of forfeiture. HILL pleaded guilty to one count of health care fraud and one count of distribution of a controlled substance. As a condition of his plea agreement, HILL has agreed to surrender any and all licenses to practice medicine in the United States, as well as his controlled substance handling and/or dispensing privileges from all state and federal agencies. HILL agrees that he will not seek to obtain or have reinstated any licenses to practice medicine or controlled substance handling and/or dispensing privileges during any period of supervision or probation.

Testimony at the guilty plea hearing revealed that Michael and Rebecca Vallery were patients of Dr. HILL's. In 2004 they were insured by United Health Group, a health care benefit program. While Ms. Vallery had been a patient, she had not seen HILL since April 7, 2003. However, HILL continued to bill for visits by Ms. Vallery when he actually treated Mr. Vallery. On February 3, 2004, Mr. Vallery went to see HILL for an appointment and HILL billed United Health Care for an office visit for Ms. Vallery. HILL charged the insurance company \$75 even though it is inappropriate for a doctor to bill for that particular type of visit when the doctor does not see the patient.

Testimony further established that on February 3, 2004, HILL wrote a prescription for 120 Oxycontin pills for Ms. Vallery. Although he had not seen her since April 2003, HILL had started writing Oxycontin prescriptions in Ms. Vallery's name in January 2004.

U.S. Attorney Washington stated: "This case demonstrates that even medical doctors can become common criminals. For whatever reason, this doctor took the low road and became a drug trafficker and a fraudster. Our system punishes those who violate the law without regard to their particular station in life."

HILL faces a maximum penalty of not more than 20 years, a \$250,000 fine, or both, on the health care fraud count; and not more than 20 years, a \$1 million fine, or both, on the drug distribution count. HILL has been detained since his arrest on January 31, 2006.

Sentencing in federal court is determined by the discretion of federal judges and the governing statute. United States Sentencing Guidelines established by the United States Congress and the United States Sentencing Commission are only used as guidelines by the judge in determining the appropriate sentence. Parole has been abolished in the federal system.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Shreveport Resident Agency, and the Office of Personnel Management, Office of Inspector General, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney C. Mignonne Griffing.

#