

Department of Justice

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Western District of New York

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FORMER NIAGARA FALL DOCTOR INDICTED ON DRUG DISTRIBUTION CHARGES IN CONNECTION WITH PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION

BUFFALO, N.Y.--U.S. Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr. announced today that a federal grand jury in Buffalo has returned a 28 count Indictment charging Pravin V. Mehta, 73, of Amherst, New York, with illegally dispensing controlled substances, primarily pain medication such as fentanyl, hydrocodone, oxycodone, and oxymorphone, from his medical office other than for a legitimate medical purpose and not in the usual course of professional practice. Mehta, whose medical office was located on Main Street in Niagara Falls, New York, closed his practice in January, after a search warrant was executed at the office and he was charged in a federal Criminal Complaint with illegal distribution of controlled substances. The charges in the Indictment carry a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison, a fine of \$250,000 or both. The Indictment also includes a forfeiture count seeking the office building which housed the medical practice and \$1,500,000 in U.S. currency.

Assistant U.S. Attorney John E. Rogowski, who is handling the case, stated that according to the Indictment, Mehta issued prescriptions for controlled substances to patients without a proper medical exam and outside the norms of professional medical treatment. The Indictment also alleges that prior to traveling outside the United States, Mehta signed blank prescription forms and directed his office staff to fill out the remaining information for the prescription in his absence. The information included the name of the patient, the drug to be dispensed, specifically including controlled substances and the dosage of the drug. Prescriptions were issued despite the fact that Mehta's office staff did not include any licensed medical professionals, such as other doctors, physician assistants, licensed nurses, or practical nurses.

Mehta was arrested along with 13 others in January 2011. To date, six defendants have been convicted.

The Indictment is the result of an investigation on the part of Special Agents of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, under the direction of John P. Gilbride, Special Agent in Charge, New York Field Division, Niagara Falls Police Department, under the direction of Chief John Chella, New York State Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement (NYS-BNE), the Internal Revenue Service, the New York State Medicaid Fraud Control Unit and the Niagara County Sheriff's Drug Task Force.

The fact that a defendant has been charged with a crime is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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