



— THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE —

DISTRICT *of* KANSAS

**Manhattan Physician Charged With Unlawfully Prescribing Prescription Drugs**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 23, 2013

TOPEKA, KAN. – A doctor in Manhattan, Kan., has been charged with unlawfully prescribing prescription drugs, U.S. Attorney Barry Grissom said today.

Physician Michael Schuster, 53, who operates Manhattan Pain and Spine in Manhattan, Kan., is charged with one count of conspiracy to illegally distribute controlled substances.

A criminal complaint filed today in U.S. District Court in Topeka alleges that Schuster employed unlicensed staff members who distributed controlled substances to patients using Schuster's signature on prescriptions while he was traveling out of the state or out of the country. The indictment alleges that Schuster was out of the office when a total of 542 patients received prescriptions for medications including oxycodone, morphine, hydromorphone, oxymorphone, fentanyl, amphetamine salts, tapentadol, methadone, methylphenidate, hydrocodone, diazepam, alprazolam, zolpidem titrate and clonazepam.

According to an investigator's affidavit, the investigation began early in 2012 when the Riley County Police Department received reports that Schuster was issuing prescriptions for high dosages of scheduled drugs based on minimal or cursory physical examinations. As a result, several patients had overdosed on their medications and Riley County Police were investigating the diversion of prescription drugs. Simultaneously, physicians and hospital staff at Fort Riley voiced concerns to Army Criminal Investigative Division that active duty soldiers and family members who died from overdoses were patients of Schuster. Investigators examined records indicating Schuster prescribed unusually high dosages of scheduled narcotics despite questionable medical necessity and allowed his patients to get early refills of controlled substances.

The affidavit states that in order to prescribe controlled substances in a legal manner a physician must meet with a patient to determine that the medication being prescribed is for a legitimate medical purpose. Only licensed health care professionals including physicians and physician assistants can lawfully issue prescriptions for controlled substances.

Investigators documented various prescriptions bearing Schuster's signature while he was on trips to Russia, South Africa, Uruguay, Canada, New York, Chile, Argentina, and Israel.

If convicted, he faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in federal prison and a fine up to \$1 million. If death or bodily injury results from the crime, the penalty is not less than 20 years. Investigating agencies include the Riley County Police Department; the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the Department of Defense, Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS); the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General (HHS-OIG); the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); the Department of Homeland Security - Homeland Security Investigations (DHS-HSI); and the Diplomatic Security Service (DSS).