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Three Indicted For Operating Illegal "Pain Clinics" In Southern Ohio

Indictment alleges that their actions led to at least 14 deaths

MAY 23 -- CINCINNATI -- A federal grand jury here has indicted two women and a physician alleging that they conspired to illegally operate pain management clinics in and around Portsmouth, Ohio, where they handed out more than 1,500,000 pain pills between October 2001 and February 2006. The pills they distributed allegedly led to the deaths of at least 14 people.

The indictment charges the following individuals:

Denise Huffman, age 54, of Portsmouth. Huffman managed the day-to-day operations of Tri-State Health Care and Pain Management, and South Point Pain Management.

Alice Huffman Ball, age 32, of Portsmouth. Ball managed the Tri-State Dispensary Center.

Dr. Paul H. Volkman, age 60, of Chicago, Illinois. Volkman represented himself as a chronic pain management doctor who worked at the clinics.

Gregory G. Lockhart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio; Robert L. Corso, Special Agent in Charge, Drug Enforcement Administration, Detroit Field Division and representatives of the other 14 federal, state and local law enforcement agencies in Ohio, Kentucky, and Illinois who conducted the investigation announced the indictment unsealed today after agents arrested the three defendants yesterday. DEA agents arrested Volkman in Chicago. Huffman and Ball, who are mother and daughter, were arrested yesterday in South Point.

Huffman had her initial appearance before U.S. Magistrate Judge Michael Hogan this afternoon in Cincinnati. Magistrate Hogan ordered her held without bail until a detention hearing on Thursday May 24 at 1:30.

Ball's initial appearance is scheduled for Wednesday, May 23 at 1:30 p.m. in Cincinnati before Magistrate Judge Hogan.

Volkman appeared in U.S. District Court in Chicago yesterday. He was ordered held pending a detention hearing at 1:45 p.m. on Thursday May 24 before U.S. Magistrate Judge Jeffrey Cole in Chicago.

"The 22-count indictment alleges that at least nine people died as a result of drugs they received from Volkman and the clinics and five others died as a result of drugs they received from Volkman at his offices in Portsmouth and Chillicothe," Lockhart said. "The charges are punishable by up to 20 years imprisonment. If a death is proven to be connected to the crimes, the defendants could face life imprisonment."

"Addressing the problem of the diversion and abuse of controlled pharmaceuticals is one of the top

priorities of the Drug Enforcement Administration," Special Agent in Charge Corso said. "This indictment serves as a warning to all medical professionals that if you illegally prescribe medication for personal gain you will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

The indictment alleges that Huffman owned and operated Tri-State Health Care and Pain Management Clinic at several locations in Portsmouth, Ohio and South Shore, Kentucky from October 2001 until

clinic at several locations in Portsmouth, Ohio and South Shore, Kentucky from October 2001 until approximately February 2006. She then opened South Point Pain Management in South Point, Ohio.

The indictment alleges that Huffman charged customers between \$125 and \$200 cash per visit to the clinic in order to see a doctor. Patients would be examined briefly by a physician then receive a prescription for pain medicine. The three defendants allegedly opened their own dispensary in 2003 as a result of local pharmacies refusing to honor prescriptions written by Volkman.

The indictment also seeks forfeiture of \$3,087,500 representing the proceeds of the crimes.

"The charges show that federal, state and local law enforcement agencies share a commitment to cooperate and punish those who dangerously and illegally distribute prescription drugs," Lockhart said.

The following federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies conducted the investigation:

Scioto County Sheriffs Office

Scioto County Coroner's Office

Portsmouth Police Department

Lawrence County Sheriffs Office

Ross County Sheriffs Office

Pipeline 23 Drug Task Force

Ohio State Highway Patrol

Kentucky State Police

Greenup County Coroners Office

Carter County Coroners Office

Lewis County Kentucky Sheriff's Office

Kentucky Office of Inspector General, Office of Drug Enforcement

Commonwealth of Kentucky Office of Attorney General

Drug Enforcement Administration offices in Columbus; Cincinnati; Louisville; London, Kentucky; Cleveland; Detroit, and Chicago, and the FBI office in Portsmouth.

U.S. District Chief Judge Sandra S. Beckwith will preside over the case. An indictment is merely an accusation. The burden of proof is on the government to show that the defendants actually committed the crimes with which they are charged.

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