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District Attorney's Office Shuts Down Three Area "Pill Mills"

Three Houston area "pill mills" were shut down last week, after eleven felony indictments were returned against clinic doctors, physician assistants and civilians. Eight people were indicted by the 182nd District Court Grand Jury for violating the Texas Medical Practice Act and violating prescription drug regulations.

The clinics that were closed pending a complete law enforcement investigation include: the Preferred Wellness Center located at 2506 W. Mount Houston, the Wellness and Weight Loss Clinic located at 316 W. Little York, and the North Houston Medical Clinic Family Practice located at 12704 North Freeway. All were found to dispense pain medications with only a cursory (or without requiring any) medical exam or physical evaluation.

Investigators from the Harris County District Attorney's Office began an undercover operation into possible illegal prescription drug activity in Harris County. They enlisted the assistance of agents from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and executed search warrants at the clinic locations. The investigations revealed an ongoing pattern of prescribing pain medication and controlled substances without following medical practice guidelines.

Harris County District Attorney Pat Lykos has made it a priority to rid our county of its reputation as a hub for pharmaceutical diversion, working with the Legislature to toughen criminal penalties for offenders and more strictly regulate the sale of prescription drugs. She said, "We are attacking the problem of pills mills at the source—the illegal clinics where people are prescribed pain medications and other controlled substances without demonstrating a need for them. We are going after the owners, the managers, the nurses, and the doctors that make their illicit profits at the expense of peoples' health and their very lives. No more hiding behind a stethoscope or a clipboard; if you are breaking the law, then you are going to jail!"

Indictments were returned against:

Dr. Dennis Rainey, 53, for operating a pain clinic without a license

Dr. Willie Hawkins, 57, for practicing medicine in violation of the Medical Practices Act

Physician Assistant Michael Dome, 58, for fraudulent delivery of a controlled substance and practicing medicine in violation of the Medical Practice Act

Dr. Rosabar Fuentes, 54, for operating a pain clinic without a license

Physician's Assistant Larry Don Wilson, 66, for fraudulent delivery of a controlled substance and practicing medicine in violation of the Medical Practices Act

Gilivada Flores, 25, for operating a pain clinic without a license

Angelia Thomas, 52, for operating a pain clinic without a license

Dr. Ben Echols, 62, for operating a pain clinic without a license and fraudulent delivery of a controlled substance.

The cases have been assigned to the 263rd and 337th District Courts.

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