

# ***NEWS RELEASE***

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***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA  
San Diego, California***

***United States Attorney  
Laura E. Duffy***

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*For Immediate Release*

**DOCTOR ARRESTED AND CHARGED WITH SELLING  
OXYCODONE PRESCRIPTIONS FOR CASH,  
WINE AND DESIGNER HANDBAGS**

**NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY – June 4, 2013**

SAN DIEGO – Physician William Joseph Watson was arrested and charged today with selling prescriptions for thousands of Oxycodone pills and other highly addictive painkillers without any legitimate medical purpose. Watson allegedly sold the prescriptions to addicts, who then used them recreationally, sold them on the street, or traded them for heroin.

According to a complaint filed in federal court today, Watson accepted thousands of dollars in cash or luxury goods, such as designer handbags, jewelry and fine wines, in exchange for the Oxycodone prescriptions.

“Prescription drug abuse and overdoses have reached alarming levels,” said U.S. Attorney Laura Duffy. “We are going after those who traffick pharmaceuticals with the same passion we have shown for dismantling the ruthless cartels that deal in cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine.”

“Knowing that prescription drug abuse is a national epidemic, DEA takes the illegal diversion of prescription drugs very seriously,” says DEA San Diego Special Agent in Charge William Sherman.

Oxycodone has become one of the preferred opioid drugs of choice by pharmaceutical drug addicts, the tablets can be crushed, snorted, injected or smoked for a quick, intense high. To prevent abuse, one manufacturer reformulated the 80 milligram pill in 2010, creating a version that could no longer be or smoked. Other versions of the pill, however—including the 30 milligram pill—can still be abused by addicts.

According to the complaint, Watson’s prescription-writing habits raised the suspicions of Drug Enforcement Administration agents, who monitor the type and quantity of medications prescribed through a state tracking system. The complaint alleges that Watson wrote a high volume of prescriptions for Oxycodone, Hydrocodone and Xanax, three of the most highly-abused medications on the market. Most of his patients were young and less likely to need large quantities of these medications. And, Watson routinely prescribed 80 milligram tablets of Oxycodone until they were reformulated. Then he switched to the 30 milligram version.

The complaint alleges that during medical appointments with confidential informants and an undercover DEA agent, Watson demonstrated that he would write a prescription for Oxycodone even though there was no legitimate medical purpose for doing so.

During one medical visit on June 25, 2012 that is described in the complaint, a confidential informant introduced an undercover DEA agent as his girlfriend, saying she was “hurting” and needed some treatment. Watson introduced himself to the so-called girlfriend and said he heard that she needed to come in for some treatment, winking at her while he said the word “treatment,” according to the complaint. During the appointment, Watson never asked to review the DEA agent’s medical records, nor did he inquire about any tests, x-rays or other diagnoses. To the contrary, Watson simply wrote her a prescription for 120 Oxycodone pills.

Under Title 21, United States Code, Section 841, and Title 21, United States Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1306.04(a), a medical doctor may not prescribe a controlled substance unless there is a legitimate medical purpose.

**DEFENDANT**

**CRIMINAL CASE NO. 13mj2172**

William Joseph Watson

Age: 58

Del Mar, CA

**SUMMARY OF CHARGES**

Counts 1-21

Title 21, United States Code, Sections 841(a)(1) and (b)(1)(C) – Dispensing Controlled Substances Without a Legitimate Medical Purpose. Maximum penalties: 20 years of custody, \$1 million fine, life-term of supervised release.

**AGENCIES**

U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration