



Department of Justice

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Southern District of Ohio

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**THREE CHARGED WITH CONSPIRACY, MAKING FALSE STATEMENTS TO
MEDICAID, AND OTHER CRIMES IN CONNECTION WITH TWO COLUMBUS
PAIN MANAGEMENT CLINICS**

COLUMBUS – A federal grand jury has indicted the owner and two employees of two pain management clinics in Columbus, alleging that they were operating as “pill mills” by distributing prescriptions for pain medicine without a legitimate medical need for the prescriptions and fraudulently billing government insurance programs for the drugs.

Carter M. Stewart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio, Robert L. Corso, Special Agent in Charge, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Lamont Pugh, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, Keith L. Bennett, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Cincinnati Field Division (FBI), Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray’s Medicaid Fraud Control Unit, Executive Director William Wimsley of the Ohio Board of Pharmacy and Franklin County Sheriff Jim Karnes announced the indictment which was returned December 21, 2010.

Charged in the indictment are:

- * Dannette M. Hawthorne, 48, of Columbus, the owner of the two Columbus clinics, Trinity Medical Center, LLC, and Perspective Medical Solutions, Inc.
- * Charlene Breedlove-Jones, 53, of Columbus. She is identified as the office manager for both clinics.
- * Deneshia M. Wakefield, 37, of Columbus. She is identified as an employee at both clinics.

The indictment alleges that the clinics began operating as “pill mills” in January 2010 by selling prescriptions for controlled substances, primarily oxycodone, without a legitimate medical need for the prescriptions. Many of the prescriptions allegedly contained the forged signatures of physicians who had temporarily worked at Trinity and Perspective, but whom had terminated their employment with the clinics prior to the forgeries. The defendants allegedly sold the prescriptions to patients for cash.

The indictment also alleges that the defendants conspired to charge patients, most of whom were Medicaid recipients, between \$150 and \$300 for each visit. The clinics refused to accept insurance and only accepted cash payments. Many of the patients travelled from other regions of Ohio, West Virginia and Kentucky. The clinics possessed virtually no medical equipment except for blood pressure cuffs, scales and exam tables. It was part of the conspiracy to direct the patients to specific pharmacies and/or to frequently change pharmacies in order to avoid the suspicion of pharmacists who became concerned about the large dosages and quantities of the pain medications being prescribed to patients by Trinity and Perspective. The pharmacies subsequently submitted the claims for payment to the Medicaid Program.

All three defendants are charged with conspiracy to distribute controlled substances. Under law, the crime can be punished by a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison. In addition, Breedlove-

Jones is charged with six counts of making false health care statements, punishable by up to five years in prison on each count. She is also charged with two counts of obtaining controlled substances by fraud, punishable by up to four years in prison. She faces two counts of distribution of a controlled substance, each carrying a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison, and one count of aggravated identity theft. The sentence for aggravated identity theft is two years in prison, consecutive to any other time served.

Wakefield faces four counts of making false health care statements, two counts of obtaining controlled substances by fraud and one count of aggravated identity theft.

Stewart commended the cooperative investigation by the federal, state and local law enforcement agencies who joined in making the announcement, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Kenneth Affeldt, who is prosecuting the case.

An indictment is merely an accusation. All defendants should be presumed innocent unless convicted in court.

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