



Mahoning County Physician Pleads Guilty to Illegally Prescribing Controlled Substances and Causing the Deaths of Two Patients

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Monday, January 24, 2022

U.S. Attorney Bridget M. Brennan announced that Martin Escobar, 58, of Youngstown, Ohio, pleaded guilty in federal court today to illegally distributing controlled substances, causing the deaths of two patients, unlawfully distributing a controlled substance to a person under the age of 21 and health care fraud.

According to court documents and the plea hearing, between March 2015 and October 2019, Escobar admitted to prescribing controlled substances out of his Lake Milton medical office, including opioids such as oxycodone and hydrocodone, often in combination with benzodiazepines and stimulants, all outside the usual course of professional practice and without a legitimate medical purpose.

Escobar admitted that, in order to support his unlawful prescription practices, he used false diagnoses, falsified patient pain intensity scales in medical charts, increased dosages of controlled substances and prescribed them for prolonged periods without evidence of efficacy. Furthermore, Escobar admitted to inadequately investigating patient pain complaints, failing to pursue treatment options other than controlled substances and falsely claiming to have performed extensive physical examinations on his patients.

Escobar also admitted to ignoring warning signs of his patients' drug addiction and abuse. This included ignoring the results of his patients' urine drug screen tests, many of which were performed in Escobar's medical office and later billed to the government. These tests suggested that patients were abusing the drugs that Escobar had prescribed, using other controlled substances and selling their prescription drugs on the illegal secondary market. As a result, Escobar pleaded guilty to health care fraud.

Escobar also admitted that, in July of 2015 and 2016, he unlawfully prescribed opioids and other controlled substances to two patients without a legitimate medical purpose. Both patients later fatally overdosed from the drugs. In another instance, in April of 2018, Escobar admitted that he unlawfully prescribed opioids to an individual under the age of 21 without a medical need.

Escobar is scheduled to be sentenced on May 17, 2022.

The case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, the Ohio



Attorney General's Healthcare Fraud Section and the Ohio Board of Pharmacy. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Brendan D. O'Shea, Elliot D. Morrison and Michael L. Collyer, and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Jonathan L. Metzler of the Ohio Attorney General's Office.

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