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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Seven Arrested in Connection to Prescription Drug Trafficking Ring

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody's Office of Statewide Prosecution, in conjunction with the Broward Sheriff's Office, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Sunny Isles Police Department, arrested seven individuals operating a large-scale prescription drug trafficking ring. The operation recruited patients to order and obtain prescription opioids using fraudulent documentation for controlled substances from doctors. Authorities arrested the defendants in Broward, Miami-Dade and Palm Beach counties.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "This criminal organization used fraudulent and illegal tactics to obtain massive quantities of prescription opioids to peddle for profit. Criminal operations like this are helping fuel the opioid crisis that is claiming 17 lives a day in our state—but I promise you—I will continue to do everything within the power of the Florida Attorney General's Office, including working with our great state and federal partners, to stop the illegal flow of these highly addictive drugs and end this crisis ravaging our state."

According to investigators, members of the drug trafficking operation arranged for straw patients to be brought to various doctor's offices, often utilizing fraudulent identification to obtain multiple prescriptions from different doctors. The ring leader, Alexander Grichener, tasked members to find patients willing to use real personal information for a specific doctor's office. The group then created fake aliases for the patients to use at other clinics in an effort to obtain multiple sets of opioid prescriptions. The operation also infiltrated doctor's offices and pharmacies to ensure the transactions were being carried out and undetected.

One of the charged individuals, Olga Alterman, worked at North Dade Wellness Center, a health clinic, assisting the criminal organization obtaining prescriptions. Alterman accepted payment from the drug dealers in exchange for the fraudulent prescriptions. A pharmacist arrested in the dismantling of the drug ring, Vera Orenshteyn, fraudulently filled the prescriptions at a Kmart pharmacy in Boca Raton and delivered the pills to the members of the organization, rather than giving the filled prescriptions to the straw patients.

The defendants gathered the prescription drugs at an office site and later distributed the pills throughout South Florida. The defendants face charges of trafficking oxycodone more than seven grams, trafficking oxymorphone more than 28 grams and conspiracy to traffic both drugs.

The individuals taken into custody as part of the drug trafficking operation are:

· Olga Alterman, 49;
· Ronald Diaz, 46;
· Alexander Grichener, 65;

· Roman Grichener, 37;
· Vera Orenshteyn, 48;
· William Washington, 58; and
· Alberto Zisman, 58.

Attorney General Moody’s Office of Statewide Prosecution will handle the case.

To view the affidavit, click here.