



BCPO News

Scott A. Coffina, Prosecutor



Philip S. Aronow
First Assistant Prosecutor

Darren N. Anderson
Chief of Detectives

Joel Bewley
Public Information Officer
Desk: 609-265-5777
Cell: 609-820-4407
jbewley@co.burlington.nj.us

December 14, 2021

Former Bordentown Physician Indicted for Narcotics Distribution and Fraud

Burlington County Prosecutor Scott Coffina announced that a former physician has been indicted on 21 counts of narcotics distribution and fraud charges for illegally prescribing thousands of highly-addictive opioid pills out of his Bordentown Township practice while simultaneously engaging in an unlawful medical billing scheme over a three-year period.

Morris "Moishe" Starkman, 62, of Yellowstone Road in Cinnaminson, was indicted by a grand jury on fifteen counts of Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance (Second Degree), five counts of Health Care Claims Fraud (Second Degree) and one count of Insurance Fraud (Third Degree). The indictment was returned November 19 and signed by First Assistant Prosecutor Philip S. Aronow. An arraignment will be held soon in Superior Court.

Starkman was charged November 22, 2019, following the execution of a search warrant at his home during which multiple electronic devices were seized, along with business, financial and medical records.

The investigation determined that between January 1, 2015 and January 1, 2018, Starkman issued prescriptions through his Bordentown Family Practice for nearly 1,400,000 total doses of opioids, including Oxycodone (OxyContin, Percocet, Roxicodone, Endocet), Hydrocodone (Vicodin, Norco, Lorcet, Lortab), Oxymorphone (Opana), Hydromorphone (Dilaudid), morphine and fentanyl.

The eight patients outlined in the criminal charges filed against Starkman received 11 doses of opioids per day on average during that period. One patient alone was prescribed 17,460 doses, which equates to more than 15 per day. They each received anywhere from four to 10 times the maximum dose recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The investigation revealed that Starkman would perform – at most – cursory examinations on patients before prescribing large amounts of opioids without medical justification, consideration of whether his patients were benefitting from the prescription painkillers he routinely and repeatedly prescribed, or exploration of the underlying causes for their pain.

Starkman maintained inadequate records on his patients which failed to document treatment plans for pain management or opioid use, or provide a legitimate medical purpose for prescribing such high quantities for an extended period of time. The reliance of his patients on the highly-addictive opioids he was prescribing insured they would frequently return to the practice for refills and be charged for an office visit.

more...

“Hundreds of thousands of Americans have died from overdoses and millions more struggle with Substance Use Disorder,” Prosecutor Coffina said. “In a great many of these cases, the person’s addiction began with prescribed opioids. Physicians who violated their oaths and patients’ trust by indiscriminately prescribing opioid medication without monitoring how their patients were doing on the drugs and whether they were becoming addicted must be held accountable for criminal conduct that has contributed to the destruction of lives and the relentless crisis of addiction so many are still dealing with.”

The investigation also revealed that Starkman, during that same time, submitted fraudulent health care claims to insurance companies for over \$50,000 for services that were unauthorized, not eligible for reimbursement, not provided as represented or not rendered.

Starkman first came to the attention of law enforcement officials in late 2016 after an insurance company contacted authorities with a suspicion of illegal activity at his practice due to the high volume of opioid prescriptions he was writing.

The State Board of Medical Examiners temporarily suspended Starkman’s license in August 2017. Under a consent order reached in April 2018, Starkman agreed to permanently surrender his license to practice medicine in New Jersey.

Records seized from Starkman’s practice revealed that one of his patients fatally overdosed in May 2015, two months after his last visit to the Bordentown office.

The records indicated that during a visit in December 2014, Starkman continued to prescribe Oxycontin to the patient, despite noting that he was “slurring and falling asleep” during the visit. The following month, when the patient visited the office because he was “sick” and “ran out of all meds early again,” Starkman wrote him a prescription for a higher dosage of Oxycodone. During the patient’s final visit in March 2015, Starkman prescribed him 120 additional Oxycodone pills, despite noting that three days earlier he had been discharged from week-long stay at a mental health and addiction treatment facility where he had sought help for anxiety and panic attacks.

Due to insufficient evidence connecting his prescriptions to the patient’s fatal overdose, Starkman was not criminally charged in connection with the patient’s death.

Starkman is being prosecuted by Assistant Prosecutor Michael Angermeier, Supervisor of the BCPO Gang, Gun and Narcotics Task Force and First Assistant Prosecutor Philip S. Aronow.

The case was investigated by the BCPO Gang, Gun and Narcotics Task Force and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration’s Diversion Control Division, with assistance from the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs Enforcement Bureau, the New Jersey Division of Criminal Justice, Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield Special Investigations, and the National Insurance Crime Bureau.

An indictment is an accusation. Defendants are presumed innocent unless or until proven guilty.

END