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July 26, 2011

**Employees at Allegheny Women's Center arrested on charges of abusing prescription drugs**

HARRISBURG - Three employees from the Allegheny Women's Center, and a former registered nurse were arrested today and charged with illegally prescribing and receiving prescription drugs.

Attorney General Linda Kelly identified the defendants as John Barrett M.D., Alton Lawson M.D., Mark Wagner and Karen Kane.

Kelly said that Dr. Barrett is the medical director at Allegheny Women's Center (AWC), 121 North Highland Ave., Suite 333, Pittsburgh. Dr. Lawson is the clinic's former medical director and currently works at AWC as a part-time physician. Wagner works as a lab technician at the clinic.

According to the criminal complaint, more than 20,000 Diethylpropion tablets were ordered for Wagner over a period of several years. Wagner allegedly used the drugs to treat anxiety and depression. The drug is actually a prescription weight loss drug commonly used to treat obesity.

The charges state that Dr. Lawson authorized an office employee to order Diethylpropion for Wagner on one occasion while he was the clinic's medical director. After Dr. Barrett took over Dr. Lawson's responsibilities he allegedly authorized the use of his Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) number for several years to order the prescription exclusively for Wagner. Neither doctor had a doctor-patient relationship with Wagner.

Kelly said that Wagner received allegedly additional prescriptions and 1200 tablets (12 bottles) anytime he indicated a "need" for the medication.

According to the criminal complaint, Wagner did not pay for the drugs and viewed them as compensation for working overtime and for regularly providing clinic supplies and office refreshments.

Kelly said that as the investigation progressed agents learned that Wagner allegedly sold the prescription tablets to Karen Kane, a friend and former registered nurse. Kane allegedly received as many as six bottles of Diethylpropion tablets from Wagner at a time.

Kelly thanked the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and Allegheny County District Attorney Stephen A. Zappala Jr. for their work on the case.

The case will be prosecuted in Allegheny County by Allegheny County District Attorney Stephen Zappala's office.

Below is a complete list of the defendants and the charges against them.

--John P. Barrett M.D., 41, 822 Vermont Ave., Pittsburgh, is charged with three counts of prohibited acts by a medical practitioner.

--Alton Lawson M.D., 72, 7500 Rosemary Road, Pittsburgh, is charged with three counts of prohibited acts by a medical practitioner.

--Mark Wagner, 48, 1519 Mansion Place, Pittsburgh, is charged with one count of criminal conspiracy, one count of prohibited acts, one count of delivery of Diethylpropion and one count of possession with the intent to deliver Diethylpropion.

--Karen Kane, 63, 313 Country View Drive, Irwin, Westmoreland County, is charged with two counts of prohibited acts, one count of criminal conspiracy, one count of tampering with evidence and one count of possession of Diethylpropion,

(A person charged with a crime is presumed innocent until proven guilty.)

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John Barrett M.D.



Alton Lawson M.D.



Mark Wagner

Karen Kane

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