



## U. S. Department of Justice

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### **FREERPORT PHYSICIAN CONVICTED OF HEALTH CARE FRAUD AND ILLEGAL DISPENSING OF CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES**

TALLAHASSEE - Thomas F. Kirwin, Acting United States Attorney for the Northern District of Florida announced today that Dr. Robert L. Ignasiak, Jr. was found guilty of 43 charges including: health care fraud; dispensing controlled substances, including fentanyl, hydrocodone, diazepam, clonazepam, morphine, and alprazolam, the use of which resulted in the death of two persons; and unlawfully dispensing controlled substances including oxycodone, morphine, fentanyl, hydrocodone, alprazolam, diazepam, clonazepam, and carisoprodol.

The guilty verdict followed nineteen days of trial, during which jurors heard evidence that Dr. Ignasiak, a licensed physician, who owned and operated Freeport Medical Clinic, prescribed controlled substances to patients in quantities and dosages that would cause patients to abuse and misuse the substances without determining a sufficient medical necessity for the prescription of these substances. The government presented evidence that Dr. Ignasiak prescribed controlled substances to patients knowing the patients were addicted to the substances, misusing the substances, or were "doctor shopping," and were requesting additional quantities of controlled substances for their drug habits. The use of controlled substances dispensed by Dr. Ignasiak resulted in the death of two patients.

Evidence at trial illustrated that Dr. Ignasiak attracted patients from all across the southeast United States because of his willingness to prescribe controlled substances with little or no medical justification. Evidence showed that nearly all his patients were prescribed controlled substances, even though he claimed to be a family practitioner with no specialty in pain management or in psychiatric medications. Many of Dr. Ignasiak's patients testified that his prescribing caused them to unknowingly become dependent or addicted to the medications.

Others testified they were drug seekers and were able to get the controlled substances they wanted from Dr. Ignasiak with little medical history, work ups, or examinations. Medical examiners testified that several of Dr. Ignasiak's patients died at least in part because of the prescribed medications.

The guilty verdict is the result of a four-year joint investigation by the North Florida Health Care Fraud Task Force, comprised of the Florida Attorney General's Office, Drug Enforcement Administration - Miami Division, Federal Bureau of Investigation - Jacksonville Division, National Drug Intelligence Center Document Exploitation Division, Defense Criminal Investigative Service, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Walton County Sheriff, and State Surgeon General, Florida Department of Health. Acting United States Attorney Kirwin expressed appreciation to all of the agents involved in the North Florida Healthcare Fraud Task Force in developing the evidence necessary to successfully prosecute this fraud. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Michelle M. Heldmyer and Benjamin W. Beard.

"This case illustrated the core dangers of pharmaceutical fraud and misuse," said FDLE Commissioner Gerald Bailey. "I am pleased with the law enforcement collaboration that delivered such a high level of commitment and expertise to this complex case."

Dr. Ignasiak will be sentenced by Senior United States District Judge Lacey A. Collier on January 27, 2009. Dr. Ignasiak faces a mandatory minimum term of 20 years' imprisonment, and a possible life sentence.