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Doctor in OxyContin case pleads guilty A Pennsauken physician, Kevin J. Lickfield, faces up to 20 years in prison for illegal sales of the powerful drug.

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By Jake Wagman **INQUIRER SUBURBAN STAFF**
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CAMDEN — A Pennsauken doctor who wrote OxyContin prescriptions for people he never treated pleaded guilty yesterday to selling hundreds of the pills of the powerful painkiller linked to dozens of deaths in the Philadelphia region.

Kevin J. Lickfield, 40, faces a maximum of 20 years in prison for conspiring to sell the narcotic along with another drug, Percocet, also a nerve relaxant.

According to court documents, Lickfield pocketed at least \$2,000 a week - \$46,600 over four months - by filling the fraudulent prescriptions at various South Jersey pharmacies and selling the pills from November 2000 to February 2001.

The scheme was discovered by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration in January 2001, when an undercover agent purchased drugs from Lickfield's partner in the deal, a Gloucester County car salesman.

Daniel T. DeLeo, 40, would sell the pills out of his office at the Woodbury Auto Exchange. He was arrested in February 2001 and is cooperating with the federal government in its case against Lickfield.

DeLeo has told law enforcement officials that Lickfield, operating out of a family practice on Westfield Avenue, would create a log for each prescription filled, fabricating records of office visits and follow-up appointments for phantom patients.

"In a way, we are almost legit," DeLeo told a DEA agent last year of those procedures, according to court documents. DeLeo, of Mullica Hill, is free on \$100,000 bail and is awaiting sentencing.

OxyContin is a powerful narcotic that, on a time-released basis, helps ease the pain associated with chronic conditions such as cancer. When crushed and ingested, however, the pill delivers a quick, heroin-like high.

The drug has contributed to at least 100 deaths in Philadelphia and surrounding Pennsylvania counties in the last two years.

In Burlington and Camden Counties, at least five deaths in the last 18 months have been attributed to oxycodone - OxyContin's key ingredient.

Lickfield, a Marlton resident, is free on \$150,000 bail and scheduled to be sentenced on Aug. 23.

He joins three area doctors who have been accused of filling fake prescriptions for OxyContin.

Bensalem physician Richard G. Paolino was convicted last month of multiple drug-related offenses and 179 counts of insurance fraud. Also convicted of helping Paolino was Philadelphia prison doctor Wesley Collier.

Another Philadelphia doctor, David Hamon, pleaded guilty to similar charges in February.

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The U.S. Attorney's Office said that Lickfield wrote prescriptions for 1,523 doses of OxyContin and 1,300 Percocet pills.

His lawyer, A. Charles Peruto Jr., said that a series of "bad investments" led Lickfield to a desperate financial situation in which he sold drugs to avoid bankruptcy.

"He became financially strapped and resorted to this," Peruto said.

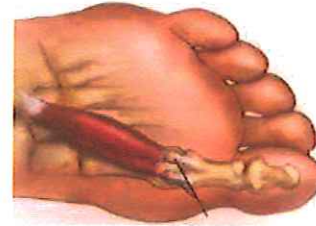
One of those investments was a Bucks County restaurant that Lickfield sold to Luigi Tripodi, a reputed member of the John Stanfa crime family who was acquitted in 1997 of racketeering.

Lickfield was a partner in the restaurant, at 2900 Street Rd. in Bensalem, with three ex-convicts identified by the Pennsylvania Crime Commission as members of the now defunct "Greek mob."

After Lickfield was indicted in August, his medical license was suspended and he was admitted to a drug treatment clinic in Waverly, Pa.

Peruto said his client was being treated for addiction to OxyContin and other drugs.

Contact Jake Wagman's e-mail address is jwagman@phillynews.com.



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