

## **PRESCRIPTIONS FOR PAIN PILLS BRING CHARGES - DEALERS GOT WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED, DEA AGENT SAYS**

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A financially struggling **Detroit** physician prescribed narcotic-level doses of pain medication to **drug dealers** and addicts who paid cash, federal law enforcement officials said Thursday.

Dr. Elena Perry-Thornton, 54, appeared Thursday in U.S. District Court in **Detroit** and was charged with illegally distributing a controlled substance.

The criminal complaint accuses Perry-Thornton of prescribing 80,464 doses this year with a minimum street value of \$3.2 million. Officials said she prescribed OxyContin, Vicodin, Xanax and Soma, a muscle relaxant that when taken with any other narcotic simulates the effects of heroin.

Perry-Thornton and her attorney, Edward Wishnow of Birmingham, declined to comment on the charges after Thursday's hearing. If convicted, Perry-Thornton faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison, a fine of up to \$1 million, or both. She is free on a \$25,000 unsecured bond with a preliminary exam scheduled for Oct. 18.

Authorities said Perry-Thornton began prescribing medication at excessive levels after filing for bankruptcy on Sept. 9, 2004. She allegedly received varying sums for each prescription - the complaint notes payments of \$50, \$100 and \$150.

In one instance, authorities said, Perry-Thornton prescribed 480 doses of OxyContin to one person in the span of 29 days - roughly eight times the recommended dosage. "Dr. Perry-Thornton is knowingly facilitating pill-seeking patients and **drug dealers** selling OxyContin by providing these individuals with prescriptions for OxyContin within a short time period," Dean Schenk, a special agent with the **Drug** Enforcement Administration, wrote in the complaint.

A pharmacist suspicious of the prescriptions allegedly signed by Perry-Thornton contacted Dearborn police, triggering the investigation. Dearborn police notified the DEA in June.

Another pharmacist, Fay Kalla, a manager at a Rite Aid in Warren, also contacted police about prescriptions Perry-Thornton's patients sought to fill there, she said Thursday.

Kalla said she sees phony prescriptions every day. But it's rare, she said, for a doctor to actually sign them.

The complaint also says Perry-Thornton's former office in the 200 block of East Harbortown Drive actually was her apartment.

Perry-Thornton was evicted in May from that apartment for violating her lease by running a business out of it and for allegedly threatening building employees. She moved her practice to a used car dealership in the 3500 block of Junction Street in **Detroit**. The phone at the dealership was disconnected Thursday.

Perry-Thornton's attorney asked Magistrate Judge Steven Whalen to lift his ruling barring her from prescribing medication.

But Whalen said: "Given the facts that have been presented so far, I believe there is a significant danger to the community."

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ILLUSTRATION: Photo

CAPTION: Dr. Elena Perry-Thornton

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