



THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of JUSTICE

United States Attorney's Office
Eastern District of Washington

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Spokane Physician Pays \$120,000 to Resolve Allegations He Prescribed Controlled Substances Without Legitimate Medical Purpose

Spokane, Washington – First Assistant United States Attorney Pete Serrano announced that Dr. Duncan Lahtinen, a licensed physician, has paid \$120,000.00 in penalties to resolve allegations that he wrote prescriptions for controlled substances that lacked legitimate medical purposes or were outside the usual course of his professional practice.

Between 2017 and 2025, Dr. Lahtinen issued over 1,400 prescriptions for controlled substances to thirteen identified patients, many of which were issued in some combination of opioids, benzodiazepines, sedatives, and carisoprodol. These combinations of controlled substances are dangerous and highly abused by those with substance use disorders. In issuing the prescriptions, the United States alleged Dr. Lahtinen failed to address numerous red flags of substance abuse by his patients. The United States contended that Dr. Lahtinen's conduct rendered him liable to the United States for civil penalties and damages under the Controlled Substances Act and the False Claims Act. Dr. Lahtinen had previously been sanctioned twice by the Washington Department of Health for improper controlled substance prescribing practices.

"Doctors are highly educated and sophisticated individuals who are trusted with the ability to prescribe controlled substances for legitimate medical purposes. When a doctor abuses that power, they trade all the principles of patient care and become drug dealers in white coats. The United States Attorney's Office will investigate and hold accountable physicians who prescribe controlled substances in this manner," said First Assistant Serrano.

"DEA holds physicians who prescribe controlled substances to a very high standard so they do not become drug dealers with a medical license," said David F. Reames, Special Agent in Charge, DEA Seattle Field Division. "Dr. Lahtinen failed to uphold this standard and DEA and our partners held him accountable."

"Physicians who distribute controlled substances outside the usual course of professional practice undermine the ongoing public health efforts to address the opioid crisis and the safety and well-being of the public," said Acting Special Agent in Charge Jeffrey McIntosh of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General (HHS-OIG). "HHS-OIG, along with our law enforcement partners, will continue to relentlessly investigate such allegations to protect patients, the public, and American taxpayers from this dangerous conduct."

The settlement can be found [here](#).

The settlement was the result of an investigation conducted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Washington, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General, Seattle Field Office. Assistant United States Attorney Jeremy Kelley of the Eastern District of Washington handled this matter on behalf of the United States.