

Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor for the City of New York

Bridget G. Brennan, Special Narcotics Prosecutor

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Upper West Side doctor and wife indicted for conspiracy and 37 illegal prescription sales: Over \$600,000 cash seized

Pill mill pumped over \$77 million in painkillers onto black market since 2009

Bridget G. Brennan, New York City's Special Narcotics Prosecutor, James J. Hunt, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's New York Division (DEA), New York City Police Commissioner William J. Bratton and Steven Banks, Commissioner of the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA), Department of Social Services, announced today the indictment and arrest of Dr. ROGELIO LUCAS and his wife, LYDIA LUCAS, who served as an office manager for her husband's medical practice.

The physician and his wife are charged with Conspiracy in the Fourth Degree and 37 counts of Criminal Sale of a Prescription for a Controlled Substance for allegedly selling prescriptions for oxycodone, a powerful opioid painkiller, in exchange for cash over the course of six and one-half years. A licensed internist since 1972, Dr. LUCAS operates a medical practice at 215 West 101st St., Suite 1A, in the Upper West Side of Manhattan.

ROGELIO LUCAS was arrested this morning inside the couple's Manhattan residence at 215 West 95th St., Apt. 8L. LYDIA LUCAS was taken into custody outside the apartment building. The arrests are the result of a long-term investigation by the Special Narcotics Prosecutor's Prescription Drug Investigation Unit, the DEA New York Division's Tactical Diversion Squad (Group TDS-NY), the New York City Police Department (NYPD) and HRA. Assisting in the investigation were the New York State Health Department's Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement (BNE), the Nassau County Police Department and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Group TDS-NY is comprised of agents and officers from the DEA, the NYPD, the Town of Orangetown Police Department and the Westchester County Police Department.

The LUCASES are scheduled to be arraigned this afternoon in Manhattan Supreme Court, Part 61, before Justice Bonnie G. Wittner, 100 Centre St, 11th floor, room 1130.

In conjunction with the arrests, agents and investigators conducted court authorized searches of the LUCASES' office and apartment in Manhattan, and a second home at 15 Black Birch Lane in Scarsdale, NY. Agents and investigators recovered more than \$600,000 cash from the Scarsdale residence. Medical records and bank records were also seized from the residences and the office.

During the conspiracy, which ran from Jan. 2, 2009 to May 13, 2015, Dr. LUCAS and his wife are charged with turning the medical practice into a pill mill and churning out tens of thousands of prescriptions for oxycodone in exchange for illegal cash payments.

Dr. LUCAS allegedly routinely wrote oxycodone prescriptions for individuals with no legitimate medical need for the pain medication. Meanwhile, his wife assisted in collecting approximately \$120 cash for each office visit. The indictment contains charges related to 37 of these illegal prescriptions. However, a court authorized review of Dr. LUCAS's prescribing history revealed he wrote oxycodone prescriptions for approximately 45 to 50 individuals per day.

Prior to the start of the conspiracy, Dr. LUCAS operated a family medical practice at another location and catered to elderly patients and those covered by Medicaid. However, in 2009 the practice underwent a radical change. From that point on, approximately 76 percent of the prescriptions Dr. LUCAS wrote were for oxycodone. Crowds gathered in the waiting room, prompting complaints by members of the community. Dr. LUCAS relocated his office three times before landing at 215 West 101st St., Suite 1A.

Cash became the preferred method of payment, rather than Medicaid reimbursements. For example, over the course of one year, between June 2013 and July 2014, Dr. LUCAS and his wife made approximately \$500,000 in cash deposits into multiple bank accounts.

Since Jan. 2, 2009, Dr. LUCAS wrote over 23,600 oxycodone prescriptions for approximately 3.1 million pills. The pills would have carried an estimated street value of \$77 million on the black market.

Investigators believe multiple drug rings received oxycodone prescriptions from Dr. LUCAS. High-level members of the drug ring served as "recruiters" and enlisted "runners" to visit the doctor's office to obtain prescriptions. In order to make a first-time appointment with the doctor, it was necessary for a recruiter known to LUCAS and his wife to vouch for a runner.

Most runners waited one or more hours before being seen by the doctor, although some received preferential treatment and moved to the head of the line. Dr. LUCAS and his wife required photo identification, but the doctor performed only the most cursory examinations and did not inquire about these individuals' injuries, medical history or level of pain. Investigators believe the prescriptions obtained from Dr. LUCAS were filled at pharmacies and the pills turned over to the drug rings for distribution.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan thanked her office's Prescription Drug Investigation Unit, the DEA's Tactical Diversion Squad, the NYPD and HRA, as well as BNE, HHS, the Nassau County Police Department, the Town of Orangetown Police Department and the Westchester County Police Department.

Bridget G. Brennan said, "Dr. Lucas is charged with being one of the city's most prolific illegal prescribers of the black market's favorite pill - 30 mg oxycodone. Instead of healing, doctors who routinely sign orders for unneeded narcotic drugs endanger the health and welfare of the public. Corrupt doctors who exchange prescriptions for cash have stoked the epidemic of addiction gripping our region."

DEA Special Agent in Charge James J. Hunt stated, "When Dr. Lucas first opened his medical practice on the Upper West Side, residents embraced the thought of having a family doctor in the neighborhood. But when Dr. Lucas' illegal medical practices pushed residents out of his office, he

replaced them with drug traffickers; exchanging medically unnecessary prescriptions for cash. Law enforcement at all levels continues to investigate and arrest those responsible for enabling the opioid addict population by distributing heroin or diverted prescription pills throughout our communities.”

“This doctor allegedly abused his position as a medical professional, profiting from the sale of prescriptions while fueling the supply of a highly addictive painkiller that has led to numerous overdose deaths,” said Police Commissioner William J. Bratton. “Thanks to the efforts of the investigators involved in this case and our law enforcement partners, this organization will no longer distribute these pills into our communities.”

HRA Commissioner Steven Banks said, “Without this doctor’s outrageous scheme, drug dealers could not have gotten hold of dangerous prescription medicine. I thank the Narcotics Prosecutor’s Prescription Drug Investigation Unit, the DEA New York Division’s Tactical Diversion Squad (Group TDS-NY) the New York City Police Department (NYPD) for their excellent work and also the HRA staff who assisted in this successful investigation.”

INDICTED DEFENDANTS	CHARGES
Rogelio Lucas 215 West 95th St., Apt. 8L New York, NY 3/23/1938	Conspiracy 4 th – 1 ct Criminal Sale of a Prescription for a Controlled Substance – 37 cts
Lydia Lucas 215 West 95th St., Apt. 8L New York, NY 10/20/1935	Conspiracy 4 th – 1 ct Criminal Sale of a Prescription for a Controlled Substance – 37 cts

The charges and allegations are merely accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.