

Doctor arrested by DEA, Redondo police in pill case is expected to ask judge for bail

A West Hollywood psychiatrist charged with running a "pill mill" in which thousands of prescriptions for addictive drugs were allegedly written in exchange for cash is expected to ask a federal judge in Los Angeles today to consider releasing him on bail.

Dr. Nathan Kuemmerle, 37, of Hollywood, was arrested April 13 at his home by Drug Enforcement Administration agents and Redondo Beach police, according to Thom Mrozek of the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Kuemmerle's office manager, Antonie "Tony" Phillips, 28, of Koreatown, was arrested the same day at the doctor's clinic on Santa Monica Boulevard, Mrozek said.

Both men were charged in a criminal complaint filed April 9 in U.S. District Court that accuses them of conspiracy to distribute controlled substances -- a charge that carries a penalty of up to 20 years in federal prison, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office.

A federal magistrate last Wednesday ordered Kuemmerle detained pending arraignment May 3, according to Mrozek. A hearing is set today before U.S. District Judge Stephen V. Wilson in which Kuemmerle is expected to ask to have the detention order reconsidered.

Phillips was released last week on a \$50,000 bond, with arraignment set for May 10, Mrozek said.

The investigation into Kuemmerle began last August, when Redondo Beach police arrested an individual who allegedly offered Adderall for sale on the Craigslist Web site, Mrozek said.

That person fingered Kuemmerle as the alleged source of the Adderall, claiming the psychiatrist wrote prescriptions on numerous occasions without any medical examination, and that he would write prescriptions for various names during a single visit, according to Mrozek.

After analyzing Kuemmerle's prescribing history and reviewing secret tapes made at the clinic, San Diego-based psychiatrist Dr. Steven Ornish concluded that "there is overwhelming evidence that Dr. Kuemmerle is running a quintessential 'pill mill,'" according to an affidavit filed in support of the criminal complaint, Mrozek said.

The affidavit in which Ornish's report is summarized states that during 2009 Kuemmerle wrote more prescriptions for the largest available dosage of amphetamine salts -- the generic name for Adderall -- than any other doctor in California, and that he wrote 3 1/2 times more amphetamine salts prescriptions than the No. 2 two prescriber of the drug.

According to the affidavit, an analysis of records from 2006 through November 2009 showed that Kuemmerle was the state's second-largest prescriber of all Schedule II drugs, which include the highly addictive substances amphetamine salts (Adderall), oxycodone (OxyContin), hydrocodone (Vicodin and Norco) and alprazolam (Xanax).