



Doctor who certified patients for medical marijuana without exams faces sentencing today

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A Grand Rapids doctor is being sentenced Monday, April 6, for his role in a marijuana case. File

GRAND RAPIDS, MI - A former Grand Rapids doctor who certified some patients and caregivers for medical marijuana cards without in-person evaluations will be sentenced Monday, April 6, in federal court.

Dr. Gregory Kuldanek pleaded guilty to conspiracy to manufacture fewer than 50 marijuana plants.

As part of a plea deal, "at great risk to himself," he provided testimony against the leaders of an organization that was growing marijuana at various places in West Michigan, his attorney, Kelly Lambert III, said in a sentencing memorandum.

Kuladanek testified against **Betty Jenkins and Phillip Walsh**, and his cooperation likely led others to enter pleas.

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Assistant U.S. Attorney Mark Courtade asked that U.S. District Judge Paul Maloney depart from sentencing guidelines because KuldaneK provided substantial assistance to the prosecution.

KuldaneK worked for East Paris Internal Medicine Associates for nearly three decades before he was arrested last spring.

KuldaneK, 58, who had no prior criminal history, has moved to Palm Springs, Calif., with his life partner, a medical assistant.

KuldaneK had focused on treating patients with HIV and AIDS. He is unemployed, and is uncertain if his medical license will be taken.

He met patients through Jenkins and "actually believed that the patients were in need of medical marijuana for pain relief related to the various medical conditions that they presented with," Lambert wrote.

"After a while, Dr. KuldaneK began to rely upon Ms. Jenkins's word that a particular individual was in need of medical marijuana and that the patient, for whatever reason, was unable to make it to Dr. KuldaneK's office for an examination," Lambert wrote.

KuldaneK, on occasion, began meeting prospective patients at restaurants and other places, his attorney said.

He said that KuldaneK acknowledged he knew that an in-person exam was required.

"Yet, in retrospect, Dr. KuldaneK believes that he was carefully groomed and manipulated and that ... his sense of compassion was taken advantage of by Ms. Jenkins and co-defendant, Phillip Walsh," Lambert said.

He said his client was not motivated by financial gain.

The government obtained names of 66 patients and caregivers linked to the alleged drug organization by issuing a grand-jury subpoena to the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs. KuldaneK had provided medical certifications to most of them, investigators said.

Police used search warrants at a home on Forest Hill Avenue SE and two four-unit apartment buildings in Gaines Township. Police say marijuana was also grown in KuldaneK's Belding property and on Alden Nash Road in Lowell Township, records showed.

Police said 467 plants and 18 pounds of processed marijuana were seized.

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