May 29, 2002

U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
Western District of Oklahoma
Robert G. McCampbell
210 West Park Avenue
Suite 400
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73102
Tel: (405) 553-8700
Fax: (405) 553-8888

Internet Doctor Sentenced to Over 4 Years in Prison

Robert McCampbell, United States Attorney for the Western District of Oklahoma, announced that Dr. Ricky Joe Nelson was sentenced to 51 months in prison for his role in a conspiracy to distribute controlled drugs through internet prescriptions. The sentence was imposed today by United States District Judge David Russell. Nelson, an Oklahoma City doctor, was convicted at trial in January of conspiring to distribute controlled drugs by giving prescriptions over the internet to patients he had never seen. Nelson was also convicted of conspiring to launder the proceeds of the scheme through a wire transfer of $175,000 to a West Indies bank account in the name of a Bahamian corporation he had formed. Nelson, 45, was sentenced to concurrent sentences of 51 months on each of the two counts. He was also sentenced to concurrent two year terms of supervised release on each count. In addition, Nelson was ordered to forfeit a total of $660,000, which includes the $175,000 in the offshore account. → This sentence should be viewed as a clear signal that illegal internet prescribing by doctors will not be tolerated,→ McCampbell said. → The sentence, though harsh, is appropriate since Dr. Nelson's license to prescribe drugs was critical to the success of the scheme.→ Evidence at trial showed that Nelson prescribed Hydrocodone, a potentially addictive painkiller, and other drugs after patients requested them on the NationPharmacy.com website. → Although the internet has made life better in many ways, there are some things which simply cannot be done in cyberspace; prescribing dangerous drugs is one of those things.→ McCampbell stated. The case was prosecuted by U.S. Attorney Robert McCampbell and Assistant U.S. Attorney Randy Sengel. The investigation was conducted by the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Internal Revenue Service.

###