

NEWS



Psychiatrist is charged after 12 patient deaths

Owen Dyer

Montreal

A psychiatrist from Atlanta, Georgia, has been charged with prescribing pain drugs outside the usual course of professional practice after 12 of his patients died from drug overdoses.

Narendra Nagareddy was arrested when more than 40 agents from the Drug Enforcement Administration and other police agencies raided his office.

Clayton County police chief, Mike Register, told *WSB-TV News* that the psychiatrist had been running a “pill mill” and dubbed him “Dr Death.”

Court documents show that 36 of the psychiatrist’s patients died while taking drugs he had prescribed. Twelve of them died specifically of “prescription drug intoxication.”

“Former and current patients have admitted to obtaining controlled substance prescriptions from Dr Nagareddy without having a legitimate medical need,” the criminal complaint said.

Nagareddy was bailed the day of his arrest and will face a hearing in February. His office is closed, and a sign directs patients with prescription drug addiction to a state crisis helpline.

In 2014 the death of Audrey Austin, a few days after an appointment with Nagareddy, was the event that first alerted police to his practice and forms a large part of the case against him. “She was an addict and he made it very easy for her,” her mother, Ruth Carr, told *WSB-TV News*.

But Nagareddy was being branded a pill pusher on doctor rating websites from 2010. “If you want drugs, this is your guy,” wrote one patient on *RateMds.com*.

“It’s by no means a personal, ‘open up and tell me what’s going on’ type of relationship,” wrote another on *vitals.com*. “It’s a ‘hurry pay me’ on his end, and a ‘hurry write the Rx’s so I can leave’ on my end!”

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2016;352:i534

© BMJ Publishing Group Ltd 2016