

Former Eugene nurse convicted of stealing medications

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Oregon Attorney General Hardy Myers on Friday announced the conviction of Carrie Ann Bowers on four counts of first-degree theft. Bowers was convicted in Lane County Circuit Court after a year-long investigation of diversion of prescription medications from three different Eugene long term care facilities where she had worked as a registered nurse.

The investigation was prompted by a report that Bowers was fired from a facility for ordering unnecessary pain medication for residents. Allegedly, the residents' physicians had neither prescribed nor ordered the drugs, but instead the drugs were intercepted and diverted by Bowers for her personal use.

The Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Unit (MFU), which has authority over allegations of abuse or neglect of patients in long term care facilities, opened an investigation into the matter. The MFU received assistance on the case from an investigator from the Office of Personnel Management, the federal agency charged with investigating matters related to insurance coverage for federal employees. The investigation revealed that in 2003, Bowers was caught diverting drugs at Sacred Heart Hospital in Eugene, Oregon. The hospital terminated her employment and Bowers was arrested on theft charges. On the criminal charge, Bowers was eligible to participate in a deferred adjudication program (DAP), and the criminal charge was vacated in 2005 after it was reported Bowers successfully completed a drug evaluation and treatment.

The MFU investigation revealed, however, that while participating in DAP, Bowers obtained a job at Riverpark Nursing and Rehabilitation Center where in 2004 she again began diverting prescription medication, and she was fired. Bowers then worked as a nurse at Hillside Heights Rehabilitation Center, where it was discovered that Bowers was again diverting prescription drugs. She was fired from Hillside Heights Rehabilitation Center in late 2005. It was this firing that prompted the report, which led to the MFU investigation.

As part of its investigation of theft of drugs from the prior two facilities, the MFU learned Bowers had obtained employment at Marquis Care Center. MFU's contact with Marquis caused management there to perform an internal audit, revealing that since the beginning of 2007, Bowers had stolen over 1,000 pills, mostly pain medication. As a result, Bowers was arrested on April 12, 2007 and the Lane County District Attorney's Office authorized the MFU to handle the prosecution of the case.

By her plea and conviction, Bowers was found guilty of stealing prescription medication from Riverside Nursing and Rehabilitation, Hillside Heights Rehabilitation Center, and Marquis Care Center. The MFU investigation did not reveal that residents failed to receive needed pain medication; rather, it was surplus medication, or medication that was scheduled to be destroyed, that was most often the target of Bowers' thefts.

As a condition of the plea, Bowers was required to surrender her nursing license. In addition, she was required to spend 30 days in custody; placed on three years formal probation; required to undergo drug treatment; required to pay \$2,500 restitution to Marquis Care Center and \$4,588 restitution to Hillside Heights Rehabilitation Center and its associated pharmacy; and required to pay a fine of \$300 or perform 60 hours of community service.

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