

MISSOULA — A Community Medical Center nurse accused of diverting drugs meant for patients for her own use admitted to charges today, U.S. Attorney Leif M. Johnson said.

Mary Schmidt Monahan, 61, of Missoula, pleaded guilty to unlawfully obtaining controlled substances as charged in an indictment. Monahan faces a maximum of four years in prison, a \$250,000 fine and one year of supervised release.

U.S. District Judge Dana L. Christensen presided. Sentencing was set for April 26. The court will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors. Monahan was released pending further proceedings.

The government alleged in court documents that from January 2020 until about February 2021, Monahan diverted fentanyl and hydromorphone while employed as a nurse in the Post-Anesthesia Care Unit at Community Medical Center in Missoula. In January 2021, another CMC employee observed Monahan engaging in what appeared to be the diversion of drugs to a patient. Monahan had two vials on her workstation when she placed something in her pocket, pulled up the sleeve of her jacket to her elbow and moved out of the employee's field of vision. When Monahan emerged, she wiped her forearm with an alcohol pad and raised her arm in the air. Shortly thereafter, Monahan requested the employee serve as a witness to the disposal of drugs, including hydromorphone and fentanyl. A review of Monahan's dispensing records noted that in December 2020, she had distributed amounts above the normal drug quantity for her unit. When questioned by supervisors, Monahan admitted she had been diverting drugs from patients for about a year. Monahan admitted to Drug Enforcement Administration agents that she had obtained medications for patients but administered only a portion of the drugs and kept the remainder for herself.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Karla E. Painter is prosecuting the case, which was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration with assistance from the Missoula Police Department.

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