

Missoula doctor settles alleged Controlled Substances Act recordkeeping violations for \$85,000

HELENA—A Missoula doctor who operated clinics in Missoula and Kalispell that dispense ketamine, a dissociative anesthetic that has some hallucinogenic effects, has agreed to pay the federal government \$85,000 to settle alleged Controlled Substances Act violations that he distributed the drug from an unregistered location and failed to maintain records for his controlled substances, U.S. Attorney Jesse Laslovich said today.

Dr. William D. Stratford Jr. entered into a civil settlement agreement with the Drug Enforcement Administration and U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Montana on Aug. 11. The terms of the agreement require Stratford to pay a settlement amount of \$85,000, attend training on the Controlled Substances Act and comply with record keeping requirements. The agreement further prohibits Stratford from prescribing controlled substances to himself or any immediate family members or office staff for five years.

“Maintaining accurate records as required by the Controlled Substance Act is critical to make sure that controlled substances, such as ketamine, are not abused or misused. We expect doctors and all providers to comply with these rules, and we take any violations of the regulations seriously. I want to thank Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael A. Kakuk and the DEA for their work on this case,” U.S. Attorney Laslovich said.

“Doctors and health care professionals are entrusted with prescribing medications responsibly and in the best interests of their patients,” said DEA Acting Special Agent in Charge James Strop III of the Rocky Mountain Field Division. “Failure to comply with the Controlled Substances Act can have serious public safety and health implications. The DEA Rocky Mountain Field Division will continue to use all the tools at our disposal to keep our communities safe.”

In a Complaint, the United States contended that in May 2021, DEA investigators conducted an inspection of Stratford's Missoula clinic, Big Sky Ketamine Care, and found violations of the Controlled Substances Act that included numerous failures to maintain complete and accurate records for his controlled substances. Stratford did not maintain as required a separate registration for controlled substances stored at his residence or at his Kalispell clinic. In addition, Stratford did not maintain as required records of receipt for ketamine and failed to provide distribution records as required for ketamine that was administered or distributed from May 2019 through February 2021. The DEA identifies ketamine as a Schedule III non-narcotic substance. The drug is a short-acting anesthetic and is used for short-term sedation and for treatment of resistant depression, post-traumatic stress, and other psychological conditions.

The settlement agreement is neither an admission of liability by Stratford nor a concession by the United States that its claims are not well-founded.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael A. Kakuk represented the United States in this matter.
The DEA conducted the investigation.