

California doctor accused of selling prescriptions

A physician who lives in Newport Coast was arrested Wednesday on charges that he sold prescriptions for addictive painkillers, federal prosecutors said.

Nazar Al Bussam, 71, who practices at clinics in Downey and Los Angeles, is charged along with two of his employees. Rosemary Mendoza, 75, and James Park, 72, were taken into custody Wednesday at the Los Angeles clinic, while Al Bussam was arrested at the Downey clinic by agents with the Drug Enforcement Administration, the U.S. Attorney's Office in Los Angeles said in a news release.

As part of the investigation, DEA undercover agents went to Al Bussam's clinic, saw the doctor and purchased prescriptions for various controlled substances, paying \$100 in cash for each prescription, prosecutors said.

During a two-year period, Al Bussam wrote nearly 60,000 prescriptions that were used to obtain narcotics, prosecutors said. Several pharmacies contacted the DEA regarding Al Bussam's prescribing activity, which made him one of the top 10 prescribers of controlled substances in the Los Angeles area, prosecutors said.

The DEA estimates that Al Bussam took in gross earnings of more than \$100,000 a month, the majority of it illegally, prosecutors said.

Drugs involved in the case are sold under the brand names OxyContin, Percocet, Percodan, Dilaudid, Vicodin, Norco, Lortab, Xanax, Suboxone, Subutex and Soma, prosecutors said.

Al Bussam, Mendoza and Park are charged with conspiracy to distribute controlled substances, which carries a maximum of 20 years in federal prison. They are expected to make an initial court appearance Thursday.