



Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor for the City of New York Bridget G. Brennan, Special Narcotics Prosecutor

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Manhattan Psychiatrist and Medical Assistant Arrested in Illegal Sales of Prescriptions for Addictive Controlled Substances

Bridget G. Brennan, New York City's Special Narcotics Prosecutor, New York City Police Commissioner Dermot F. Shea, Department of Social Services Commissioner Steven Banks and Erin E. Ives, Acting Medicaid Inspector General for New York State, announced today the arrests of a Manhattan psychiatrist and a medical assistant for allegedly abusing their positions to knowingly sell prescriptions for addictive controlled substances, commonly known as Xanax and Adderall, to undercover officers in exchange for cash, without medical justification.

As a result of a yearlong investigation by the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor's Prescription Drug Investigation Unit (PDIU), the New York City Police Department's (NYPD) Narcotics Borough Manhattan South, the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) and the New York State Office of the Medicaid Inspector General (OMIG), psychiatrist Dr. LEON VALBRUN and medical assistant PO YU YEN, aka "Brian," were arrested at approximately 6:10 p.m. yesterday evening at VALBRUN's medical office, located at 37 East 28th Street, Suite 508, in the Madison Square North neighborhood of Manhattan. Each defendant faces multiple counts of Criminal Sale of a Prescription for a Controlled Substance. They are scheduled for arraignment today in Manhattan Criminal Court.

In conjunction with the arrests, detectives and investigators with the NYPD and the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor conducted a court authorized search of the medical office at 37 East 28th Street, Suite 508. The investigation revealed that the office was open three days per week. Dr. VALBRUN also holds a faculty position in the psychiatry department of a Brooklyn medical center. None of the crimes charged relate to his work at the medical center.

Dr. VALBRUN and YEN allegedly issued illegal prescriptions for two of the most highly diverted and abused controlled substances in New York State, alprazolam (an anti-anxiety medication often known by its trade name Xanax) and amphetamine/dextroamphetamine (often known by its trade name Adderall), in exchange for cash for no legitimate medical purpose.

In the summer of 2019, the NYPD received a complaint of an increase in what appeared to be drug-seeking activity in front of 37 East 28th Street and discovered online reviews about Dr. VALBRUN referencing overdoses and the availability of Xanax and Adderall in exchange for cash.

Two NYPD undercover officers posed as patients and visited Dr. VALBRUN's office during the investigation. They both received prescriptions for alprazolam and amphetamine without being examined by Dr. VALBRUN. They instead met with YEN, who as a medical assistant has neither the training nor the authority to prescribe controlled substances. In some instances, other staff who appeared to be receiving training from YEN were also present to observe the medical visit and prescribing. The undercover officers videotaped their visits.

An undercover officer first visited Dr. VALBRUN's office on January 11, 2020 and was seen by YEN. She said she wanted a Xanax prescription because she was addicted and liked the way it made her feel. She further said she used it recreationally and had never seen a psychiatrist. YEN allegedly agreed to start her on a different anti-anxiety medication and switch her to Xanax next time. The undercover paid \$300 cash and was issued an electronic prescription for 60 .5mg lorazepam pills in the name of Dr. VALBRUN. The undercover officer returned five more times and always met with YEN.

The following month, the undercover officer returned and reminded YEN that she wanted a prescription for Xanax. YEN allegedly said, "Oh I remember, yeah yeah okay," without any further discussion of symptoms. The undercover paid \$120 cash and received an electronic prescription for 60 1mg Xanax pills, again in the name of Dr. VALBRUN.

On the third office visit, Dr. VALBRUN was present in the office and asked if the undercover was a new patient. The undercover said she was there for a refill and was allegedly directed to YEN. The undercover received a prescription for a higher dosage of 60 alprazolam 2mg pills. On subsequent visits, the undercover requested Adderall in addition to the Xanax prescription and received the 60 alprazolam 2mg pills as well as 60 amphetamine/dextroamphetamine 10mg pills, despite having given no reason why she needed or wanted Adderall.

In September of 2020, the undercover officer called the office and spoke directly to Dr. VALBRUN about renewing her prescriptions for alprazolam and amphetamine.

A second undercover officer made four visits to Dr. VALBRUN's office, with the first on March 14, 2020. The undercover paid \$300 cash and met with YEN and two women who identified themselves as nurse practitioners. The undercover officer said he had been using heroin and oxycodone and that he wanted a prescription for Xanax because it helped him stay off of those other drugs. He said he had been buying Xanax on the street. The undercover officer received a prescription in Dr. VALBRUN's name for 60 alprazolam .5mg pills, despite the fact that the combination of alprazolam and opioid drugs is known to be lethal.

In subsequent visits, the second undercover officer requested and received higher dosages of Xanax. There was no discussion of symptoms or why the undercover needed the increase. The undercover requested and received prescriptions for Adderall in addition to the alprazolam after stating that he wanted to be able to focus on his music. He received prescriptions in the name of Dr. VALBRUN for 60 alprazolam 2mg pills and 60 amphetamine/dextroamphetamine 10mg pills.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan thanked Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance Jr. and commended the work of her office's Prescription Drug Investigation Unit, the NYPD's Narcotics Borough Manhattan South, the New York City Human Resources Administration and the New York State Office of the Medicaid Inspector General.

"The allegations in this case could not be more stark: a purported psychiatry office issued prescriptions for controlled substances upon request in exchange for cash, endangering the lives of New Yorkers," Special Narcotics Prosecutor Brennan said, "Two undercover officers who posed as patients struggling with substance use disorder never even met with the doctor during 10 office visits. One undercover told

office staff that she wanted the drugs for recreational use, while the other described a pattern of drug use that put him at risk of overdose. Both received multiple prescriptions in increasingly larger doses. These interactions were captured on videotape.”

“As alleged in this case, these defendants violated their oath to their profession and their responsibility to help New Yorkers,” said Police Commissioner Dermot Shea. “From early on in this investigation, our NYPD investigators worked closely with New York City’s Special Narcotics Prosecutor and all of our partners to make sure these individuals would be brought to justice.”

“Ensuring safe and supportive services for our clients is our top priority as we help New Yorkers in need get back on their feet — and we condemn the actions of these unscrupulous individuals who deliberately preyed on New Yorkers battling substance use challenges,” said Department of Social Services Commissioner Steven Banks. “We are proud to have played a role in bringing these bad actors to justice and thank our colleagues in law enforcement for their ongoing dedication and support in protecting and serving our most vulnerable neighbors.”

Erin E. Ives, Acting Medicaid Inspector General, said, “This investigation revealed a blatant disregard of both the health care professionals’ oath to ‘do no harm’ as well as the rule of law. My office will continue to work with the Special Narcotics Prosecutor and our other law enforcement and government partners to hold fully accountable those who jeopardize the health and safety of the most vulnerable New Yorkers by attempting to defraud the Medicaid program for personal gain.”

Indicted Defendants	Charges
Leon Valbrun Bay Shore, NY 6/3/1953	Criminal Sale of a Prescription for a Controlled Substance – 16 cts
Po Yu Yen, aka “Brian” Queens, NY 8/18/1986	Criminal Sale of a Prescription for a Controlled Substance – 14 cts

The charges and allegations are merely accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.