

THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT *of* GEORGIA

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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Southern District of Georgia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Savannah clinic owner sentenced to federal prison for laundering money for 'pill mill'**

### **Defendant also bought Mercedes and Hummer with profits**

SAVANNAH, GA: A former Garden City, Ga., clinic owner and CEO has been sentenced to federal prison after admitting she laundered money in connection with a notorious "pill mill" doctor who illegally dispensed massive amounts of drugs.

**Jamesetta Whipple-Duncan**, 59, of Savannah, was sentenced to 60 months in prison after pleading guilty in U.S. District Court to one count of Money Laundering, said David H. Estes, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Georgia. U.S. District Court Judge Lisa Godbey Wood also ordered Whipple-Duncan to pay \$86,074 in restitution and to serve three years of supervised release after completion of her prison sentence. There is no parole in the federal system.

"This sentence holds accountable yet another instrumental figure who helped pour gasoline on the raging fire of the opioid addiction crisis," said U.S. Attorney Estes. "Along with our law enforcement partners, we will continue to bring to justice those who exacerbate drug addictions in our community, whether they stand on street corners or dress in lab coats."

As described in the plea agreement and other court documents, Whipple, as owner of the now-closed Georgia Laboratory Diagnostics LLC, in Garden City, Ga., was an employer of **Dr. Frank Bynes Jr.**, 69, of Savannah. Bynes was sentenced in February 2020 to 240 months in prison and ordered to pay \$615,145 in restitution to Medicare, Medicaid and Tricare after being found guilty by a federal jury on 13 counts of Unlawful Dispensation of Controlled Substances and three counts of Health Care Fraud.

For Whipple-Duncan's role, she owned and operated the clinic, hired Dr. Bynes, and then profited as her clinic provided Bynes with a base of operation from which he illegally distributed controlled substances, including highly addictive opioids and drug cocktails favored by addicts. Whipple-Duncan controlled the

finances of the clinic, which largely consisted of cash from the clinic's patients. Whipple-Duncan used that cash to continue operations of the clinic, and to finance expenditures for herself, including a Mercedes-Benz sedan, a Hummer H2, a Can-Am Spyder, and a Polaris Slingshot.

"Denying deceitful medical providers the opportunity to improperly prescribe highly-addictive pills is a key priority for the DEA," said Robert J. Murphy, the Special Agent in Charge of the Atlanta Field Division of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. "This investigation was a success thanks to collaboration with local law enforcement."

"In the midst of this country's prescription opioid epidemic, it is the FBI's goal to work with our law enforcement partners to prosecute anyone who recklessly overprescribes pharmaceutical pills, especially for non-medical reasons," said Keri Farley, Special Agent in Charge of FBI Atlanta. "Whipple-Duncan's actions directly contributed to the opioid crisis in our community and for that she is being held accountable."

"Aiding in the illegal prescription of large amounts of drugs both undermines critical measures to address the opioid crisis and also puts patients at serious risk of overdose and other forms of physical harm," said Tamala Miles, Special Agent in Charge at the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Inspector General (HHS-OIG). "HHS-OIG will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to hold accountable bad actors who exploit opioid addiction for personal financial gain."

"The opioid addiction crisis in this country deeply affects the military members as well as their families," stated Special Agent in Charge Cynthia A. Bruce, Department of Defense Office of Inspector General, Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS), Southeast Field Office. "The selfishness of Whipple-Duncan represents another reprehensible side of this crisis where greed outweighs the humanity towards those struggling with addiction. DCIS will continue to work closely with our investigative partners to hold those responsible who advance the opioid crisis for their own personal gain."

The case was investigated by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, the FBI, the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, and an investigator with the U.S. Attorney's Office. Whipple-Duncan is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jonathan A. Porter and Patrick J. Schwedler.

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**Topic(s):**

Drug Trafficking  
Opioids  
Prescription Drugs  
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**Component(s):**

Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)  
Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)  
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