
Document: Former Medical Center Physician Enters Guilty Plea to...

Former Medical Center Physician Enters Guilty Plea to Child Pornography Charges

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Body

GALVESTON, Texas -- A former pediatric oncologist at The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center has pleaded guilty to receipt, access with intent to view and possession of child pornography charges, announced U.S. Attorney Kenneth Magidson.

At the time of his arrest in June 2015, Dennis Patrick Meehan Hughes, 49, of Pearland, worked at M.D. Anderson, but he is no longer employed there.

This case was initiated pursuant to a nationwide investigation known as Operation Pacifier which targeted users of a TOR network child pornography website whose primary purpose was to advertise and distribute child pornography. Following the February 2015 arrest of the primary site administrator, law enforcement was able to identify more than 1,000 U.S.-based user IP addresses. One of those addresses resolved back to the residence of Hughes.

Law enforcement executed a federal search warrant at his residence on June 5, 2015, at which time they arrested Hughes and seized his computers and other items.

Today, he appeared in federal court before U.S. District Judge George C. Hanks Jr. in Galveston, admitting he received and possessed numerous images of child pornography, to include prepubescent girls with their genitals lasciviously displayed. Some of the images also

depicted young girls being penetrated, both orally and vaginally. The government also offered evidence that images of child pornography were found on his work computer as well.

In total, law enforcement discovered 329 videos and 2,693 unique images attributable to Hughes.

Judge Hanks has set sentencing for June 1, 2016. At that time, Hughes faces a minimum of five and up to 20 years for the receipt and up to 10 years for the access with intent to view and possession of child pornography as well as a possible \$250,000 maximum fine. Upon completion of any prison term imposed, Hughes would also face a minimum of five years and a maximum of life on supervised release during which the court can impose a number of special conditions designed to protect the children and prohibit the use of the Internet. He would also be required to register as a sex offender.

He was permitted to remain on bond pending his sentencing hearing.

The charges against Hughes are the result of an investigation conducted by members of the Houston FBI, Pearland Police Department, Texas Department of Public Safety and the University of Texas Police Department.

This case, prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Sherri Zack, was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse. Led by the United States Attorneys' Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who sexually exploit children, and to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.usdoj.gov/psc For more information about internet safety education, please visit www.usdoj.gov/psc and click on the tab "resources."

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