

Davenport pharmacist pleads innocent to taking 9,000 painkiller pills

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By **Brian Krans**, bkrans@qconline.com

A former Davenport pharmacist has pleaded not guilty to stealing more than 9,000 hydrocodone pills - the most commonly prescribed and illegally sold painkiller.

Bill Thomas Poulos, 38, of 2625 W. 54th St., allegedly admitted to taking the pills over 2 1/2 years while working at CVS Pharmacy, 1777 N. Division St., according to court records.

He was charged this week in Scott County District Court with drug possession and delivery and prohibited acts, which, if convicted, could land him up to 10 years in jail.

Mr. Poulos was charged after an internal audit at the pharmacy, where he reportedly was seen on video putting pills into his pocket, according to an affidavit filed in court.

On Jan. 11, CVS reported it to police.

In an interview with a Davenport police detective, Mr. Poulos admitted to taking 9,000 to 9,500 pills of hydrocodone and 40-50 pills each of diazepam and alprazolam, both sedatives used to treat anxiety, the affidavit states.

Police searched his house with permission and found 56 other prescription pills, which Mr. Poulos admitted taking, the affidavit states.

He was being held at the Scott County Jail late Friday on \$50,000. He's due back in court Feb. 14.

Davenport police Detective Shawn Roth said Mr. Poulos told him the pills were for personal use and he didn't sell them. It averages out to about 70 pills a week, "which wouldn't be out of the realm of possibilities depending on his tolerance," the detective said.

Hydrocodone - most commonly known under the names Vicodin, Lortab or Lorcet - is prescribed after surgeries and tooth extraction.

In 2006, nearly 130 million prescriptions for hydrocodone-containing products were dispensed, the Drug Enforcement Administration estimated.

The year before, hydrocodone-combination products were associated with an estimated 51,225 emergency room visits nationwide - more than any other pharmaceutical opioid, according to the Drug Abuse Warning Network.

Chris Endress, director of the Quad City Metropolitan Enforcement Group, said of the few prescription pill cases they see each year, hydrocodone, valium, and oxycontin are the most common. Hydrocodone, he said, can sell for as much as \$10 a pill.

While some users prefer prescription pills to regular street drugs because they believe the quality is better and therefore safer, Mr. Endress said they should think again.

Fake oxycontin pills have hit the market, and contain the powerful painkiller fentanyl, which accounted for hundreds of deaths across the country in 2006 because the pills were used to make heroin.

"They think if they buy an 80mg pill of oxycontin, they're getting an 80mg pill of oxycontin," Mr. Endress said. "These people buying prescription medications on the street need to know there's no guarantee."