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Attorney: Judge 'absolutely not guilty'
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GULFPORT -- An attorney for Gulfport Municipal Judge Bill Atchison said Thursday that his client had legitimate reasons for obtaining painkiller medicine from multiple local doctors, one of whom was his father.

"This man is absolutely not guilty," said Gulfport attorney **Wayne Woodall**, who is representing Atchison. "It's not like he went doctor shopping like many people do to get multiple bottles of substances. He had bona fide medical and dental problems for which he sought bona fide medical treatment."

Woodall said Atchison, who was arrested Wednesday and charged with nine counts of prescription fraud, has had to undergo two surgeries since 2006 because of severe problems with kidney stones.

In the past eight or nine years, **Woodall** said, his client has had a total of three surgeries. In addition to kidney stone problems, **Woodall** explained that Atchison also suffers from a serious case of TMJ, a dental ailment that affects the jaw, and had to seek medical treatment for that for which he was prescribed additional medication.

"It's certainly not a case of a patient taking one ailment and visiting multiple doctors simply for duplicating pain medication," **Woodall** said. "And there was no misrepresentation made to any of the practitioners at any time."

Agents with the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics were in charge of the investigation that had been ongoing for months before the 49-year-old Gulfport lawyer's arrest.

After his arrest, Harrison County Justice Court Judge Gene Dedeaux released Atchison on a \$90,000 bond and placed him under house arrest, though **Woodall** said his client was simply ordered to have a GPS monitor on him and is still allowed to leave his home and travel in- and out-of-state as long as he informs the courts of his plans.

The former Chancery Court judge candidate, who will also undergo a pain, drug and psychological assessment within 30 days, did not wish to comment on the charges against him.

According to court records, Atchison went from one doctor to another for different prescriptions that he had filled at different Gulfport pharmacies. Most of the prescriptions, records show, were for the prescription painkiller hydrocodone, a drug that narcotics agents say is commonly abused.

Among the doctors who prescribed the medication, records show, was Atchison's father, Dr. William D. Atchison,

In one case, for example, Atchison allegedly obtained a prescription for a 17-day supply of

hydrocodone from his father, Dr. Atchison, which he had filled at Beach Pharmacy on Aug. 28, 2007, and then obtained another prescription for hydrocodone from another doctor 10 days later that he had filled at French's Drug Company, Inc. At the same time, or within days of filling the other two prescriptions, records show, Atchison allegedly obtained two more prescriptions from his father, both for liquid pain medication that is not supposed to be taken in conjunction with hydrocodone.

In each of the charges filed against Atchison, the same pattern of alleged prescription fraud is documented. Many of the doctors who prescribed the drugs signed a waiver saying that they would not have prescribed Atchison the pain medication had they known of the other prescriptions he was having filled. Atchison's father, who could not be reached to comment, was not listed among the doctors who signed the waivers.

Woodall confirmed that his client sometimes asked his father for prescriptions, and "his dad would call in some refills." The affidavits also said that Atchison's father's registration to write prescriptions through the Drug Enforcement Administration was retired or expired at the time that he supplied the prescriptions to his son.

In response, **Woodall** said, "We were unaware of that, and I'm sure his father was too. If, in fact, it was true, we haven't verified that fact."

He added: "We hope there is prompt resolution so that we can dispel the rumors about doctor shopping and any other impropriety."

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