

Doctor indicted on 19 fraud, drug counts

By SCOTT WILLIAMS
of the Journal Star

CANTON — An established 67-year-old local physician was indicted by a federal grand jury Tuesday on charges of unlawfully distributing narcotic drugs to his patients and making false health insurance claims.

Dr. Franz A. Strauch, a 40-year veteran of the medical community with offices in Canton and Farmington, was indicted on 19 drug and fraud counts following a 1½-year federal investigation.

The indictment charges that, between 1983 and 1986, Strauch provided four of his patients with 2,200 to 4,700 tablets of Dilaudid, a highly-addictive painkiller usually prescribed only to terminal cancer patients.

In addition, Strauch is charged with defrauding Medicare of insurance benefits by falsely claiming that he had performed psychotherapy on a patient for whom the government

claims no such therapy was provided.

The indictment also includes 10 counts of mail fraud stemming from Strauch's alleged use of the U.S. Postal Service to collect those and other fraudulent health insurance payments.

The indictment was returned by a federal grand jury in Springfield before U.S. District Judge Richard S. Mills. No arraignment date was scheduled.

Contacted at his Canton home Tuesday night, Strauch called the indictment "a joke" and said he will defend himself in court against all allegations.

"Do you know what the purpose of this is? It's to destroy my business," he said. "That's what they want. You know how the government works."

Peoria attorney Robert H. Jones, who is representing Strauch, said he had not seen the indictment, but he reiterated that his client intends to

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