

2 DELRAY MEN PLEAD GUILTY IN STEROID CASE

BYLINE: TONY DORIS, Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

DATE: April 26, 2007

PUBLICATION: Palm Beach Post, The (FL)

EDITION: FINAL

SECTION: LOCAL

PAGE: 3B

MEMO: Did not run MSL.

Less than a week after their physician business partner filed to have charges against himself dismissed, two South Florida Internet steroid sellers have pleaded guilty to charges stemming from a series of nationwide investigations into sales of muscle-building drugs.

Brian Schafler, 34, and Greg Trotta, 38, of Davie Internet operator MedX Life, on Wednesday became the second and third South Florida businessmen to take plea deals in exchange for reduced charges and sentencing recommendations. In the cases brought by the Albany County, N.Y., district attorney, Trotta and Schafler, residents of Delray Beach, faced six counts for selling steroids and human growth hormones illegally, with possible sentences of 14 years. Under the deals worked out with prosecutors, the two admitted to one count of "diversion of medical prescriptions," a felony carrying no jail time and a maximum of five years' probation if they cooperate in ongoing investigations.

Each will have to forfeit \$10,000. If they fail to cooperate, they could face four years in jail.

Trotta's lawyer, Larry J. Rosen, declined comment. Schafler's lawyer, Michael Katzer, did not return calls. Unlike Schafler and Trotta, Boca Raton physician Gary Brandwein on Friday filed a motion seeking dismissal of the charges, arguing that New York state law doesn't apply to Florida doctors or require face-to-face exams.

"This in no way affects my client's case," said Richard Tendler, Florida attorney for Brandwein, who wrote prescriptions for clients solicited by Trotta and Schafler. "They must have thought they did something wrong. Dr. Brandwein hasn't done anything wrong. That's why he did not plead guilty."

The three partners were charged along with 11 other Florida pharmacy owners and employees, Internet drug sellers and physicians, in the first salvo of coordinated state and federal investigations into allegedly illicit sales of steroids and human growth hormone.

The major target of the investigation has been Signature Pharmacy of Orlando, the company that supplied millions of dollars worth of the drugs to companies that allegedly orchestrated prescriptions, sight unseen.

~ tony_doris@pbpost.com