BEFORE THE BOARD OF PHARMACY DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of the Accusation Against:

LIVE WELL MMA LLC., DBA I CARE PHARMACY, MARK MAHER ADAM

Pharmacy Permit No. PHY 55946,

and

MARK MAHER ADAM

Pharmacist License No. RPH 74501

Respondents.

Agency Case No. 7109

OAH No. 2022060827

DECISION AND ORDER

The attached Stipulated Surrender of License and Order is hereby adopted by the Board of Pharmacy, Department of Consumer Affairs, as its Decision in this matter.

This Decision shall become effective at 5:00 p.m. on April 19, 2023.

It is so ORDERED on March 20, 2023.

BOARD OF PHARMACY DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Ву

Seung W. Oh, Pharm.D. Board President

1	ROB BONTA Attorney General of California	
2	SHAWN P. COOK	
3	Supervising Deputy Attorney General VINODHINI RAMAGOPAL	
4	Deputy Attorney General State Bar No. 240534	
5	300 So. Spring Street, Suite 1702 Los Angeles, CA 90013	
	Telephone: (213) 269-6270	
6	Facsimile: (916) 731-2126 Attorneys for Complainant	
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9	BOARD OF P DEPARTMENT OF CO	_
10	STATE OF CA	ALIFORNIA
11	T A ME A CA A CA A CA	C N 7100
12	In the Matter of the Accusation Against:	Case No. 7109
13	LIVE WELL MMA LLC., DBA I CARE PHARMACY, MARK MAHER ADAM	OAH No. 2022060827
14	17620 Bellflower Boulevard, Unit B-104 Bellflower, CA 90706	STIPULATED SURRENDER OF LICENSE AND ORDER
15	Pharmacy Permit No. PHY 55946,	
16	and	
17	MARK MAHER ADAM	
18	1837 W. Cerritos Avenue Anaheim, CA 92804	
19	Pharmacist License No. RPH 74501	
20	Respondents.	
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23	IT IS HEREBY STIPULATED AND AGRI	EED by and between the parties to the above-
24	entitled proceedings that the following matters are	true:
25	PART	
26		Executive Officer of the Board of Pharmacy
27	(Board). She brought this action solely in her offi	•
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Rob Bonta, Attorney General of the State of California, by Vinodhini Ramagopal, Deputy Attorney General.

- 2. Live Well MMA LLC., dba I Care Pharmacy, Mark Maher Adam (Respondent) is representing itself in this proceeding and has chosen not to exercise its right to be represented by counsel.
- 3. On or about January 18, 2018, the Board of Pharmacy (Board) issued Pharmacy Permit No. PHY 55946 to Respondent Live Well MMA LLC., dba I Care Pharmacy, Mark Maher Adam (member and manager) ("I Care Pharmacy"). The Pharmacy Permit was in full force and effect at all times relevant to the charges brought in Accusation No. 7109, but was cancelled on April 1, 2021.
- 4. On or about March 17, 2016, the Board issued Pharmacist License Number RPH 74501 to Respondent Mark Maher Adam. The Pharmacist License was in full force and effect at all times relevant to the charges brought in Accusation No. 7109, and will expire on October 31, 2023, unless renewed.

JURISDICTION

5. Accusation No. 7109 was filed before the Board, and is currently pending against Respondent. The Accusation and all other statutorily required documents were properly served on Respondent on August 5, 2021. Respondent timely filed its Notice of Defense contesting the Accusation. A copy of Accusation No. 7109 is attached as Exhibit A and incorporated by reference.

ADVISEMENT AND WAIVERS

- Respondent has carefully read, and understands the charges and allegations in Accusation No. 7109. Respondent also has carefully read, and understands the effects of this Stipulated Surrender of License and Order.
- 7. Respondent is fully aware of its legal rights in this matter, including the right to a hearing on the charges and allegations in the Accusation; the right to be represented by counsel, at its own expense; the right to confront and cross-examine the witnesses against them; the right to present evidence and to testify on its own behalf; the right to the issuance of subpoenas to compel

the attendance of witnesses and the production of documents; the right to reconsideration and court review of an adverse decision; and all other rights accorded by the California Administrative Procedure Act and other applicable laws.

8. Respondent voluntarily, knowingly, and intelligently waives and gives up each and every right set forth above.

CULPABILITY

- Respondent understands that the charges and allegations in Accusation No. 7109, if proven at a hearing, constitute cause for imposing discipline upon his Pharmacy Permit and his Pharmacist License.
- 10. For the purpose of resolving the Accusation without the expense and uncertainty of further proceedings, Respondent agrees that, at a hearing, Complainant could establish a factual basis for the charges in the Accusation and that those charges constitute cause for discipline. Respondent hereby gives up their right to contest that cause for discipline exists based on those charges.
- 11. Respondent understands that by signing this stipulation they enable the Board to issue an order accepting the surrender of their Pharmacy Permit and Pharmacist License without further process.

CONTINGENCY

12. This stipulation shall be subject to approval by the Board. Respondent understands and agrees that counsel for Complainant and the staff of the Board may communicate directly with the Board regarding this stipulation and surrender, without notice to or participation by Respondent. By signing the stipulation, Respondent understands and agrees that they may not withdraw its agreement or seek to rescind the stipulation prior to the time the Board considers and acts upon it. If the Board fails to adopt this stipulation as its Decision and Order, the Stipulated Surrender and Disciplinary Order shall be of no force or effect, except for this paragraph, it shall be inadmissible in any legal action between the parties, and the Board shall not be disqualified from further action by having considered this matter.

- 13. The parties understand and agree that Portable Document Format (PDF) and facsimile copies of this Stipulated Surrender of License and Order, including PDF and facsimile signatures thereto, shall have the same force and effect as the originals.
- 14. This Stipulated Surrender of License and Order is intended by the parties to be an integrated writing representing the complete, final, and exclusive embodiment of their agreement. It supersedes any and all prior or contemporaneous agreements, understandings, discussions, negotiations, and commitments (written or oral). This Stipulated Surrender of License and Order may not be altered, amended, modified, supplemented, or otherwise changed except by a writing executed by an authorized representative of each of the parties.
- 15. In consideration of the foregoing admissions and stipulations, the parties agree that the Board may, without further notice or formal proceeding, issue and enter the following Order:

ORDER

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that Pharmacy Permit No. PHY 55946 issued to Respondent Live Well MMA LLC., dba I Care Pharmacy, Mark Maher Adam; and Pharmacist License Number RPH 74501 issued to Mark Maher Adam are surrendered and accepted by the Board.

- 1. The surrender of Respondent's Pharmacy Permit and Pharmacist License and the acceptance of the surrendered licenses by the Board shall constitute the imposition of discipline against Respondents. This stipulation constitutes a record of the discipline and shall become a part of Respondent's license history with the Board. Respondents understand and agree that for purposes of Business and Professions Code section 4307, this surrender shall be construed the same as revocation.
- 2. Respondent Mark Maher Adam shall lose all rights and privileges as a Pharmacist in California as of the effective date of the Board's Decision and Order.
- 3. Respondent Live Well MMA LLC., dba I Care Pharmacy, Mark Maher Adam shall lose all rights and privileges for its Pharmacy Permit in California as of the effective date of the Board's Decision and Order.
- 4. Respondent shall cause to be delivered to the Board its pocket license and, if one was issued, its wall certificate on or before the effective date of the Decision and Order.

1	ENDORSE	EMENT
2	The foregoing Stipulated Surrender of Licens	se and Order is hereby respectfully submitted
3 4	for consideration by the Board of Pharmacy of the	Department of Consumer Affairs.
5	DATED:	Respectfully submitted,
6		ROB BONTA Attorney General of California
7		Attorney General of California SHAWN P. COOK Supervising Deputy Attorney General
8	8	Supervising Deputy Theorney General
9	9	VINODHINI RAMAGOPAL
10	10	Deputy Attorney General Attorneys for Complainant
11	11	Thorneys for complainant
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1		ENDORSEMENT			
2	The foregoing Stipulated Surr	The foregoing Stipulated Surrender of License and Order is hereby respectfully submitted			
3		narmacy of the Department of Consumer Affairs.			
4	DATED: 2/9/23				
5	DAILD.	Rob Bonta			
6 7		Attorney General of California SHAWN P. COOK Supervising Deputy Attorney General			
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10		VINODHINI RAMAGOPAL Deputy Attorney General Attorneys for Complainant			
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Exhibit A

Accusation No. 7109

1	ROB BONTA				
2	Attorney General of California ARMANDO ZAMBRANO				
3	Supervising Deputy Attorney General KIM KASRELIOVICH				
4	Deputy Attorney General State Bar No. 261766				
5	300 So. Spring Street, Suite 1702 Los Angeles, CA 90013				
6	Telephone: (213) 269-6444 Facsimile: (916) 731-2126				
7	E-mail: Kim.Kasreliovich@doj.ca.gov Attorneys for Complainant				
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9	BEFOR BOARD OF F				
10	DEPARTMENT OF CO STATE OF C	ONSUMER AFFAIRS			
11	STATE OF C.	ALIFORNIA			
12		Case No. 7109			
13	In the Matter of the Accusation Against:	Case 110. 7109			
14	LIVE WELL MMA LLC., DBA I CARE PHARMACY,	ACCUSATION			
15 16	Mark Maher Adam, Member and Manager, 17620 Bellflower Boulevard, Unit B-104 Bellflower, CA 90706	ACCUSATION			
17	Pharmacy Permit No. PHY 55946,				
18	and				
19	MARK MAHER ADAM				
20	1837 W. Cerritos Avenue Anaheim, CA 92804				
21	Pharmacist License No. RPH 74501				
22	Respondents.				
23					
24	PART	<u>CIES</u>			
25	1. Anne Sodergren (Complainant) brings	s this Accusation solely in her official capacity			
26	as the Executive Officer of the Board of Pharmac	y, Department of Consumer Affairs.			
27	2. On or about January 18, 2018, the Bo	ard of Pharmacy issued Pharmacy Permit			
28	Number PHY 55946 to Live Well MMA LLC., dl	oa I Care Pharmacy, Mark Mahar Adam as			
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(c) The pharmacist-in-charge shall be responsible for a pharmacy's compliance with all state and federal laws and regulations pertaining to the practice of pharmacy...

13. Section 4306.5 of the Code states:

Unprofessional conduct for a pharmacist may include any of the following:

- (a) Acts or omissions that involve, in whole or in part, the inappropriate exercise of his or her education, training, or experience as a pharmacist, whether or not the act or omission arises in the course of the practice of pharmacy or the ownership, management, administration, or operation of a pharmacy or other entity licensed by the board.
- (b) Acts or omissions that involve, in whole or in part, the failure to exercise or implement his or her best professional judgment or corresponding responsibility with regard to the dispensing or furnishing of controlled substances, dangerous drugs, or dangerous devices, or with regard to the provision of services.
- (c) Acts or omissions that involve, in whole or in part, the failure to consult appropriate patient, prescription, and other records pertaining to the performance of any pharmacy function.
- (d) Acts or omissions that involve, in whole or in part, the failure to fully maintain and retain appropriate patient-specific information pertaining to the performance of any pharmacy function.

HEALTH AND SAFETY CODE STATUTES

- 14. Section 11153 of the Healthy and Safety Code provides in part:
- (a) A prescription for a controlled substance shall only be issued for a legitimate medical purpose by an individual practitioner acting in the usual course of his or her professional practice. The responsibility for the proper prescribing and dispensing of controlled substances is upon the prescribing practitioner, but a corresponding responsibility rests with the pharmacist who fills the prescription. Except as authorized by this division, the following are not legal prescriptions: (1) an order purporting to be a prescription which is issued not in the usual course of professional treatment or in legitimate and authorized research; or (2) an order for an addict or habitual user of controlled substances, which is issued not in the course of professional treatment or as part of an authorized narcotic treatment program, for the purpose of providing the user with controlled substances, sufficient to keep him or her comfortable by maintaining customary use....
- 15. Health and Safety Code Section 11162.1 states, in part:
- "(a) The prescription forms for controlled substances shall be printed with the following features: . . . (2) A watermark shall be printed on the backside of the prescription blank; the watermark shall consist of the words "California Security Prescription." . . . (13) An identifying number assigned to the approved security printer by the Department of Justice.. . . (b) Each batch of controlled substance prescription forms shall have the lot number printed on the form and each form within that batch shall be numbered sequentially beginning with the numeral one."

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Except as provided in Section 11167, no person shall prescribe a controlled substance, nor shall any person fill, compound, or dispense a prescription for a controlled substance, unless it complies with the requirements of this section.

- (a) Each prescription for a controlled substance classified in Schedule II, III, IV, or V, except as authorized by subdivision (b), shall be made on a controlled substance prescription form as specified in Section 11162.1 and shall meet the following requirements:
- (1) The prescription shall be signed and dated by the prescriber in ink and shall contain the prescriber's address and telephone number; the name of the ultimate user or research subject, or contact information as determined by the Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services; refill information, such as the number of refills ordered and whether the prescription is a first-time request or a refill; and the name, quantity, strength, and directions for use of the controlled substance prescribed.
- (2) The prescription shall also contain the address of the person for whom the controlled substance is prescribed. If the prescriber does not specify this address on the prescription, the pharmacist filling the prescription or an employee acting under the direction of the pharmacist shall write or type the address on the prescription or maintain this information in a readily retrievable form in the pharmacy.
- (b) (1) Notwithstanding paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of Section 11162.1, any controlled substance classified in Schedule III, IV, or V may be dispensed upon an oral or electronically transmitted prescription, which shall be produced in hard copy form and signed and dated by the pharmacist filling the prescription or by any other person expressly authorized by provisions of the Business and Professions Code. Any person who transmits, maintains, or receives any electronically transmitted prescription shall ensure the security, integrity, authority, and confidentiality of the prescription.
- (2) The date of issue of the prescription and all the information required for a written prescription by subdivision (a) shall be included in the written record of the prescription; the pharmacist need not include the address, telephone number, license classification, or federal registry number of the prescriber or the address of the patient on the hard copy, if that information is readily retrievable in the pharmacy.
- (3) Pursuant to an authorization of the prescriber, any agent of the prescriber on behalf of the prescriber may orally or electronically transmit a prescription for a controlled substance classified in Schedule III, IV, or V, if in these cases the written record of the prescription required by this subdivision specifies the name of the agent of the prescriber transmitting the prescription.
- (c) The use of commonly used abbreviations shall not invalidate an otherwise valid prescription.
- (d) Notwithstanding subdivisions (a) and (b), prescriptions for a controlled substance classified in Schedule V may be for more than one person in the same family with the same medical need. . . .

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STATE REGULATORY AUTHORITY

- 17. California Code of Regulations, title 16, section 1761, states:
- (a) No pharmacist shall compound or dispense any prescription which contains any significant error, omission, irregularity, uncertainty, ambiguity or alteration. Upon receipt of any such prescription, the pharmacist shall contact the prescriber to obtain the information needed to validate the prescription.
- (b) Even after conferring with the prescriber, a pharmacist shall not compound or dispense a controlled substance prescription where the pharmacist knows or has objective reason to know that said prescription was not issued for a legitimate medical purpose.

FEDERAL REGULATIONS

- 18. Code of Federal Regulations, title 21, part 1306, section 04, states in pertinent part:
- (a) A prescription for a controlled substance to be effective must be issued for a legitimate medical purpose by an individual practitioner acting in the usual course of his professional practice. The responsibility for the proper prescribing and dispensing of controlled substances is upon the prescribing practitioner, but a corresponding responsibility rests with the pharmacist who fills the prescription. An order purporting to be a prescription issued not in the usual course of professional treatment or in legitimate and authorized research is not a prescription within the meaning and intent of section 309 of the Act and the person knowingly filling such a purported prescription, as well as the person issuing it, shall be subject to the penalties provided for violations of the provisions of law relating to controlled substances.

COST RECOVERY

19. Section 125.3 of the Code states, in pertinent part, that the Board may request the administrative law judge to direct a licentiate found to have committed a violation or violations of the licensing act to pay a sum not to exceed the reasonable costs of the investigation and enforcement of the case.

DRUG CLASSIFICATIONS

BRAND NAME	GENERIC NAME	DANGEROU S DRUG PER B&PC 4022	CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE PER H&SC	INDICATIONS FOR USE
Adderall	dextroamphetamine/ amphetamine mixed salts (amphetamine)	Yes	Yes - Schedule II per HSC 11055(d)(l)	ADHD
Norco	hydrocodone/ acetaminophen (h/apap)	Yes	Yes- Schedule II per Title 21 CFR 1308.12(b)(1)(vi)	Pain

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Percocet	oxycodone/ acetaminophen (oxycodone/apap)	Yes	Yes - Schedule II per HSC 11055(b)(l)(M)	Pain
Phenergan with Codeine Syrup	promethazine with codeine syrup	Yes	Yes - Schedule V per HSC 11058(c)(l)	Cough
Roxicodone	oxycodone immediate-release	Yes	Yes - Schedule II per HSC 11055(b)(l)(M)	Pain
Soma	carisoprodol	Yes	Yes - Schedule IV per Title 21 CFR 1308.14(c)(6)	Muscle Relaxant
Xanax	alprazolam	Yes	Yes - Schedule IV per HSC 11057(d)(l)	Anxiety

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

- 20. On or about September 24, 2020, an Inspector for the Board of Pharmacy conducted an inspection at I Care Pharmacy. Pharmacist-in-Charge and owner, Mark Adam was present for the inspection. PIC Adam works alone at the pharmacy.
- 21. At the inspection, the Inspector obtained approximately 239 original prescription documents from six different prescribers. The inspector also requested that Respondent provide her with the electronic records of all prescriptions dispensed at I Care Pharmacy between January 18, 2018 and September 24, 2020.
- 22. On or about October 8, 2020, the Inspector received the electronic dispensing data via email from Respondent.
- 23. Using the dispensing records and prescription documents provided by Respondent, the Inspector determined that I Care Pharmacy filled approximately 14, 251 prescriptions during the period of January 18, 2018 through September 24, 2020. This is an average of approximately 23 prescriptions per day.
- 24. The records also revealed objective factors indicating the medical illegitimacy of the prescriptions of commonly abused controlled substances, attributed to these prescribers, including the following:

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Physician Assistant Jennifer Edwards

- 25. PA Edwards was the top prescriber of promethazine/codeine and oxycodone 30 mg at I Care Pharmacy. Respondents dispensed approximately 698 prescriptions under PA Edwards; 257 of which were controlled substances.
 - 26. The top five medications prescribed by PA Edwards are as follows:

Medication	Drug Schedule	Number of Prescriptions Dispensed	Percent of Total Prescriptions Dispensed
PROMETHAZINE-CODEINE SYRUP	5	181	25.93%
BENZONATATE 100 MG CAPSULE	0	42	6.02%
BANOPHEN 25 MG CAPSULE	0	33	4.73%
OXYCODONE HCL 30 MG TABLET	2	32	4.58%
CARISOPRODOL 350 MG TABLET	4	30	4.30%
	ı	Total:	45.56%

- 27. Approximately 97% of the prescriptions issued by PA Edwards were paid for in cash. Typically, patients prefer to use insurance to offset the high out-of-pocket costs for medications. Cash payment at such a high rate is a red flag for medical illegitimacy.
- 28. PA Edwards prescriptions were often stamped with the words "Pain Management" but approximately 26% of PA Edwards prescriptions were for promethazine/codeine. In addition, in at least eleven instances these prescriptions were dispensed 3-33 days after the prescription was written. Typically a patient suffering from a cough would seek medicine to alleviate it as soon as possible, this is a red flag.
- 29. Approximately ten patients with prescriptions from PA Edwards had an address of 30-79 miles away from the pharmacy. One patient had an address more than 400 miles away.
- 30. PA Edwards prescribing history included 32 prescriptions for oxycodone 30 mg, which is the highest strength available, and no prescriptions for lower strength. Approximately 12 patients with prescriptions from PA Edwards appeared to not be opioid tolerant and yet were

receiving extremely high doses as an initial dose. If there is no apparent history of the patient receiving an opioid over time, then dosing with the highest available strength is both potentially very dangerous and a red flag of illegitimacy.

31. According to the electronic dispensing data provided by the pharmacy, the dispensed controlled substance prescriptions under PA Edwards' credentials included approximately: 43,440 mL (about 92 pints) of promethazine/codeine syrup, 3,000 tablets of oxycodone 30 mg, 1,800 tablets of carisoprodol 350 mg, 820 tablets of hydrocodone/acetaminophen 10/325 mg, and 390 tablets of alprazolam 2 mg. All of these prescriptions were filled personally by PIC Adam.

Dr. O.N.¹

- 32. Dr. O.N. was the second top prescriber of promethazine/codeine and fourth top prescriber of oxycodone 30 mg at I Care Pharmacy. Respondents dispensed approximately 1,364 prescriptions under Dr. O.N.; 259 of which were controlled substances.
- 33. Promethazine/codeine was Dr. O.N.'s most commonly prescribed medication, accounting for 11% of his total prescribing. All of the prescriptions were off-peak cold season. These are factors of irregularity.
- 34. Dr. O.N. prescribed exclusively at the highest available strength of alprazolam. Dr. O.N.'s prescribing history included 28 prescriptions for alprazolam 2 mg and no prescriptions for any lower strength. Exclusively prescribing a high dose of a benzodiazepine is a factor of irregularity.
- 35. All 21 patients who received alprazolam 2mg appeared to be potentially naïve to benzodiazepines and yet received the highest dose to start. If there is no apparent history of the patient receiving a benzodiazepine over time, then dosing with the highest available strength is both potentially very dangerous and a red flag of illegitimacy.
- 36. Dr. O.N. prescribed exclusively at the highest available strength of oxycodone. Dr. O.N.'s prescribing history included 17 prescriptions for oxycodone 30 mg and no prescriptions for any lower strength. Exclusively prescribing a high dose of an opioid is a factor of irregularity.

¹ Dr. O.N.'s full name has been omitted to protect his privacy. At present, there are no public criminal charges or licensing actions pending against Dr. O.N.

- 37. Approximately six patients with prescriptions from Dr. O.N. had an address approximately 32-74 miles away from the pharmacy. Two additional patients had addresses more than 300 miles from the pharmacy.
- 38. Dr. O.N.'s prescribing history included 9 prescriptions for oxycodone 30 mg, which is the highest strength available, for patients who appeared to not be opioid tolerant and yet were receiving extremely high doses as an initial dose. If there is no apparent history of the patient receiving an opioid over time, then dosing with the highest available strength is both potentially very dangerous and a red flag of illegitimacy.
- 39. The records reflected at least two instances of dispensing both promethazine/codeine and oxycodone, interacting prescriptions, to the same patient on the same day.
- 40. According to the electronic dispensing data provided by the Respondents, the dispensed controlled substance prescriptions under Dr. O.N.'s credentials included approximately: 36,774 mL (about 78 pints) of promethazine/codeine syrup, 2,770 tablets of alprazolam 2 mg, 2,690 tablets of hydrocodone/acetaminophen 10/325 mg, 1,860 carisoprodol 350 mg, 1,670 tablets of oxycodone 30 mg, 940 tablets of oxycodone/acetaminophen 10/325 mg, 500 tablets of amphetamine 30 mg, and 105 tablets of hydrocodone/acetaminophen 5/325 mg. All of these prescriptions were filled personally by PIC Adam.

Dr. Amir Friedman

- 41. Dr. Friedman was the third highest prescriber of promethazine/codeine at I Care Pharmacy. Respondents dispensed approximately 290 prescriptions under Dr. Friedman; 130 of which were controlled substances.
 - 42. The top five medications prescribed by Dr. Friedman are as follows:

Medication	Drug Schedule	Number of Prescriptions Dispensed	Percent of Total Prescriptions Dispensed
PROMETHAZINE-CODEINE SYRUP	5	95	32.76%
AZITHROMYCIN 250 MG TABLET	0	8 4	28.97%

CYPROHEPTADINE 4 MG TABLET	0	52	17.93%
ALPRAZOLAM 2 MG TABLET	4	14	4.83%
CARISOPRODOL 350 MG TABLET	4	13	4.48%
		Total:	88.97%

- 43. Approximately 75% of the prescriptions issued by Dr. Friedman were paid for in cash. Typically, patients prefer to use insurance to offset the high out-of-pocket costs for medications. Cash payment at such a high rate is a red flag for medical illegitimacy.
- 44. Promethazine/codeine was Dr. Friedman's most commonly prescribed medication, accounting for 33% of his total prescribing. Majority of the prescriptions were off-peak cold season. These are factors of irregularity.
- 45. Dr. Friedman prescribed exclusively at the highest available strength of alprazolam. Dr. Friedman's prescribing history included 14 prescriptions for alprazolam 2 mg and no prescriptions for any lower strength. Exclusively prescribing a high dose of a benzodiazepine is a factor of irregularity.
- 46. Dr. Friedman prescribed exclusively at the highest available strength of oxycodone. Dr. Friedman's prescribing history included 7 prescriptions for oxycodone 30 mg and no prescriptions for any lower strength. Exclusively prescribing a high dose of an opioid is a factor of irregularity.
- 47. Approximately four patients with prescriptions from Dr. Friedman had an address approximately 32-41 miles away from the pharmacy. One additional patient had an address more than 300 miles from the pharmacy.
- 48. Of the 30 original prescription documents collected by the Inspector, regarding prescriptions by Dr. Friedman, 23 lacked a watermark printed on the backside of the prescription document consisting of the words "California Security Prescription" as required by statute.

 Instead, the watermark on the back of the prescription document read "DocuGard." This omitted security feature invalidates the prescription and is a strong indicator if illegitimacy.

49. In addition, all of these prescriptions were for promethazine/codeine, a schedule V controlled substance and the two main prescribing offices were 21-38 miles away. These are both factors of irregularity.

50. According to the electronic dispensing data provided by the pharmacy, the dispensed controlled substance prescriptions under Dr. Friedman's credentials included approximately: 22,778 mL (about 48 pints) of promethazine/codeine syrup, 840 tablets of alprazolam 2 mg, 906 tablets of carisoprodol 350 mg, 630 tablets of oxycodone 30 mg, and 120 tablets of hydrocodone/acetaminophen 5/325 mg. All of these prescriptions were filled personally by PIC Adam.

Dr. B.V.²

51. Dr. B.V. was the fourth highest prescriber of promethazine/codeine at I Care Pharmacy. Respondents dispensed approximately 520 prescriptions under Dr. B.V.; 148 of which were controlled substances.

52. The top five medications prescribed by Dr. B.V. are as follows:

Medication	Drug Schedule	Number of Prescriptions Dispensed	Percent of Total Prescriptions Dispensed
PROMETHAZINE-CODEINE SYRUP	5	65	12.50%
AMOXICILLIN 500 MG CAPSULE	0	59	11.35%
CARISOPRODOL 350 MG TABLET	4	29	5.58%
ALPRAZOLAM 2 MG TABLET	4	27	5.19%
STOOL SOFTENER 250 MG SOFT GEL	0	23	4.42%
		Total:	39.04%

² Dr. B.V.'s full name has been omitted to protect his privacy. At present, there are no public criminal charges or licensing actions pending against Dr. B.V.

- 53. Promethazine/codeine was Dr. B.V.'s most commonly prescribed medication, accounting for 12% of his total prescribing. All of the prescriptions were off-peak cold season. These are factors of irregularity.
- 54. Dr. B.V. prescribed exclusively at the highest available strength of alprazolam. Dr. B.V.'s prescribing history included 27 prescriptions for alprazolam 2 mg and no prescriptions for any lower strength. Exclusively prescribing a high dose of a benzodiazepine is a factor of irregularity.
- 55. Approximately 17 of the 21 patients who received alprazolam 2mg appeared to be potentially naïve to benzodiazepines and yet received the highest dose to start. If there is no apparent history of the patient receiving a benzodiazepine over time, then dosing with the highest available strength is both potentially very dangerous and a red flag of illegitimacy.
- 56. Dr. B.V. prescribed exclusively at the highest available strength of oxycodone. Dr. B.V.'s prescribing history included 13 prescriptions for oxycodone 30 mg and no prescriptions for any lower strength. Exclusively prescribing a high dose of an opioid is a factor of irregularity.
- 57. Approximately six patients who received oxycodone 30 mg appeared to be potentially naïve to opioids and yet received the highest dose to start. If there is no apparent history of the patient receiving an opioid over time, then dosing with the highest available strength is both potentially very dangerous and a red flag of illegitimacy.
- 58. Approximately 52 patients received prescriptions from Dr. B.V. during the query period at I Care Pharmacy. The following were factors of irregularity and red flags: All 52 patients received at least one prescription of promethazine/codeine or oxycodone 30 mg; approximately 21 patients received at least one prescription of alprazolam 2 mg; and approximately 2 patients had an address 39-41 miles away from the pharmacy.
- 59. Of the 48 original prescription documents collected by the Inspector, regarding prescriptions by Dr. B.V., all 48 lacked the following required security features:
 - a. A watermark printed on the backside of the prescription document consisting of the words "California Security Prescription". Instead, the watermark on the back of the prescription document read "DocuGard."

- An identifying number assigned to the approved security printer by the Department of Justice.
- Lot number printed on the prescription form identifying the batch of controlled substance prescription forms.
- 60. The records reflected at least two instances of dispensing both promethazine/codeine and oxycodone, interacting prescriptions, to the same patient on the same day.
- 61. According to the electronic dispensing data provided by the pharmacy, the dispensed controlled substance prescriptions under Dr. B.V.'s credentials included approximately: 15,471 mL (about 32 pints) of promethazine/codeine syrup, 2,680 tablets of carisoprodol 350 mg, 2,600 tablets of alprazolam 2 mg, 1,350 tablets of oxycodone 30 mg, 690 tablets of hydrocodone/acetaminophen 10/325 mg, 660 tablets of oxycodone/acetaminophen 10/325 mg, and 200 tablets of amphetamine 30 mg. All of these prescriptions were filled personally by PIC Adam.

Dr. J.C.³

- 62. Dr. J.C. was the sixth highest prescriber of promethazine/codeine at I Care Pharmacy. Respondents dispensed approximately 215 prescriptions under Dr. J.C.; 35 of which were controlled substances.
- 63. Promethazine/code was Dr. J.C.'s most commonly prescribed medication, accounting for 15% of his total prescribing. All of the prescriptions were off-peak cold season. These are factors of irregularity.
- 64. Approximately 31 patients received prescriptions from Dr. J.C. during the query period at I Care Pharmacy. The following were factors of irregularity and red flags: All 31 patients received at least one prescription of promethazine/codeine; approximately 1 patient had an address over 300 miles away; and approximately 1 patient had an address 48 miles away from the pharmacy.⁴
 - 65. Multiple patients were dispensed prescriptions for promethazine/codeine on the

³ Dr. J.C.'s full name is being omitted to protect his privacy. Dr. J.C. affirmatively verified that the prescriptions at issue in this case, written under his prescribing authority, were not written by him,

⁴ In addition, all of the prescriptions were for patients over 18 and the real Dr. J.C. is a pediatrician.

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According to the electronic dispensing data provided by the pharmacy, the dispensed controlled substance prescriptions under Dr. J.C.'s credentials included approximately: 7,680 mL (about 16 pints) of promethazine/codeine syrup, and 150 tablets of carisoprodol 350 mg. All of these prescriptions were filled personally by PIC Adam.

Dr. M.G.⁵

- 67. Dr. M.G. was the third highest prescriber of oxycodone at I Care Pharmacy. Respondents dispensed approximately 94 prescriptions under Dr. M.G.; 30 of which were controlled substances.
- 68. Oxycodone was Dr. M.G.'s most commonly prescribed medication, accounting for 32% of his total prescribing. This is a factor of irregularity.
- 69. Dr. M.G. prescribed exclusively at the highest available strength of oxycodone. Dr. M.G.'s prescribing history included 30 prescriptions for oxycodone 30 mg and no prescriptions for any lower strength. Exclusively prescribing a high dose of an opioid is a factor of irregularity.
- 70. Approximately 24 patients received prescriptions from Dr. M.G. during the query period at I Care Pharmacy. All 24 patients received at least one prescription of oxycodone 30 mg. This is a red flag.
- 71. Approximately 12 patients who received oxycodone 30 mg appeared to be potentially naïve to opioids and yet received the highest dose to start. If there is no apparent history of the patient receiving an opioid over time, then dosing with the highest available strength is both potentially very dangerous and a red flag of illegitimacy.
- According to the electronic dispensing data provided by the pharmacy, the 72. dispensed controlled substance prescriptions under Dr. M.G.'s credentials included approximately 2,685 tablets of oxycodone 30 mg. All of these prescriptions were filled personally by PIC Adam. ///

⁵ Dr. M.G.'s full name is being omitted to protect his privacy. Dr. M.G. informed the Board investigator that his area of specialty was neurology and he did not recall ever being contacted by a pharmacist from I Care Pharmacy.

FIRST CAUSE FOR DISCIPLINE

(Corresponding Responsibility)

- 73. Respondent Live Well MMA LLC., dba I Care Pharmacy and Respondent Mark Maher Adam are subject to disciplinary action under Code sections 4301, subdivision (d), (j) and (o), 4302 and 4113 on the grounds of unprofessional conduct in that they failed to assume their corresponding responsibility to ensure that controlled substances are dispensed for a legitimate medical purpose, in violation of Code section 4306.5, Health and Safety Code section 11153, and California Code of Regulations, title 16, section 1761, subdivisions (a) and (b). Respondents failed to exercise their best professional judgment and evaluate the totality of the circumstances (information from the patient, physician and other sources) to determine a prescription's legitimate medical purpose, in connection with the prescribers' controlled substance prescriptions. Respondents ignored numerous warning signs or red flags in prescriptions from PA Jennifer Edwards, Dr. O.N., Dr. Amir Friedman, Dr. B.V., Dr. J.C, and Dr. M.G. that should put a reasonable and prudent dispensing pharmacist on notice that a prescription may not have been issued for a legitimate medical purpose, including but not limited to:
 - a. About 75-97% of the prescriptions written by two prescribers were purchased in cash, meaning without the financial aid of prescription insurance, in contrast to the typical payment pattern at I Care Pharmacy where about 25% of prescriptions purchased during this query period were purchased in cash;
 - b. A commonly abused controlled substance was the top prescribed medication under the listed prescribers at I Care Pharmacy. Furthermore, commonly abused controlled substances accounted for a significant portion of the total prescribing under the listed prescribers at I Care Pharmacy;
 - c. Every patient under the listed prescribers received at least one prescription of promethazine/codeine or oxycodone 30 mg at I Care Pharmacy;
 - d. At least 39 patients under the listed prescribers appeared to be potentially not opioid tolerant and receiving a strong opioid as an initial treatment at I Care Pharmacy;
 - e. At least 38 patients under the listed prescribers appeared to be potentially naive to

THIRD CAUSE FOR DISCIPLINE

(Unprofessional Conduct)

75. Respondent Live Well MMA LLC., dba I Care Pharmacy and Respondent Mark Maher Adam are subject to disciplinary action pursuant to Code sections 4301 and 4113, in that Respondents committed unprofessional conduct, as more fully discussed in paragraphs 22 through 74, above.

OWNERSHIP PROHIBITION

- 76. As set forth above, section 4307, subdivision (a), provides in pertinent part, that any person whose license has been revoked or is under suspension shall be prohibited from serving as a manager, administrator, owner, member, officer, director, associate or partner of a licensee.
- 77. Pursuant to section 4307, if Mark Maher Adam had knowledge of, or knowingly participated in, any conduct for which Pharmacy Permit PHY 55946 was revoked, suspended or placed on probation, while acting as administrator, owner, member, officer, director, associate, or partner of a licensee, for five years if Pharmacy Permit PHY 55946 is placed on probation, or until Pharmacy Permit PHY 55946 is reinstated if Pharmacy Permit PHY 55946 is revoked.

PRAYER

WHEREFORE, Complainant requests that a hearing be held on the matters herein alleged, and that following the hearing, the Board of Pharmacy issue a decision:

- Revoking or suspending Pharmacy Permit Number PHY 55946, issued to Live Well MMA LLC., dba I Care Pharmacy;
- 2. Prohibiting Live Well MMA LLC, dba I Care Pharmacy from serving as manager, administrator, owner, member, officer, director, associate, partner, or in any other position with management or control of a licensee for five years if Pharmacy Permit Number PHY 55946 is placed on probation, or until Pharmacy Permit Number PHY 55946 is reinstated if Pharmacy Permit Number PHY 55946 is revoked;
- 3. Prohibiting Mark Maher Adam from serving as manager, administrator, owner, member, officer, director, associate, partner, or in any other position with management or control of a licensee for five years if Pharmacy Permit Number PHY 55946 is placed on probation, or

1	until Pharr	nacy Permit Number	r PHY 55946 is reinstated if Pharmacy Permit Number PHY 55946
2	is revoked	•	
3	4.	Revoking or suspen	nding Pharmacist License Number RPH 74501, issued to Mark
4	Maher Ada	am;	
5	5.	Ordering Live Wel	l MMA LLC., dba I Care Pharmacy and Mark Maher Adam to pay
6	the Board	of Pharmacy the reas	sonable costs of the investigation and enforcement of this case,
7	pursuant to	Business and Profe	ssions Code section 125.3; and,
8	6.	Taking such other	and further action as deemed necessary and proper.
9			
10	DATED:	7/29/2021	Signature on File
11	DATED.		ANNE SODERGREN Executive Officer
12			Board of Pharmacy Department of Consumer Affairs
13			State of California Complainant
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(LIVE WELL MMA LLC., DBA I CARE PHARMACY and MARK MAHER ADAM) ACCUSATION