



Ending drug diversion has long been priority

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I respond to Sarasota pharmacist Maria Alessio's letter to the editor Sunday, regarding the diversion of prescription medication and her contention that former Sarasota County Sheriff Bill Balkwill let the pharmaceutical diversion unit "deteriorate."

Two and half years ago, I opened a pain management practice in Venice, and, from day one, I have worked with the most dedicated group of Sheriff's Office detectives on an almost weekly basis. They have investigated and arrested individuals who were attempting to fraudulently obtain controlled medication from my practice. In fact, 14 individuals were taken out of the practice in handcuffs and dozens more were arrested elsewhere.

Sheriff's Detective Don Kennard and those with whom he has partnered (including Detective Gene Frangioni of the Venice Police Department, as part of the Sheriffs Special Investigations Bureau) have worked tirelessly and made themselves available at a moment's notice. Balkwill was not only supportive of these detectives, he was proactive on the drug diversion issue.

I met with Balkwill on more than one occasion, and he gave me his full support on my efforts to see that those with prescriptions for painkillers show a photo ID before receiving the medication. And I am proud to say that requirement is now law. (This idea for this law was given to me by Kennard.) Balkwill also supported legislation for a prescription-monitoring program.

I am glad, though, that Sheriff Tom Knight has found additional funding for a strengthened diversion unit.

Paul Sloan, Administrator

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Venice