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Hospital Pays \$4.5M to Settle CSA Case; Two Nurses Died From Overdoses

By Nina Youngstrom

The deaths of two hospital nurses from overdoses of drugs allegedly diverted from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center (UTSW) played a part in its \$4.5 million settlement for allegedly violating the Controlled Substances Act, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Texas said Nov. 30.^[1] This is the second largest settlement in the nation involving drug diversion at a hospital and requires "extensive" corrective action, the U.S. attorney's office said.

Drug diversion is a universal problem, and the opportunities may have multiplied as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, experts say.^[2] For example, to conserve personal protective equipment (PPE), nurses could access automated dispensing cabinets (ADCs) containing narcotics without their fingerprint to avoid taking off their glove. And the stressful work environment and lack of in-person addiction services has made health care workers more vulnerable to drug diversion while attention to the problem has waned.

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