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NEWS RELEASE

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NAPA MAN PLEADS NO CONTEST TO SELLING AND DISPENSING CONTACT LENSES WITHOUT A LICENSE

Arrest underscores California State Board of Optometry's efforts to halt unlicensed practice

NAPA – A Napa man has pleaded “no contest” to misdemeanor criminal charges for selling cosmetic contact lenses without a license. The plea comes as the result of a “sting” operation conducted by the California Department of Consumer Affairs’ Division of Investigation on behalf of the California Board of Optometry.

Ahmad Hussein Marini, who worked as General Manager of the “Doc of Rock” store in Napa, was placed on three years’ probation as a result of his plea. In addition, store owner Najjar R. Sadeddin, was ordered to pay \$6,000 in fines, including nearly \$2,500 to the Board of Optometry to cover the cost of its investigation.

“This investigation should send a warning that the Department of Consumer Affairs and the Board of Optometry will not tolerate unlicensed activity in California,” said Department of Consumer Affairs Director Denise Brown. “Unlicensed activity undermines the credibility and undercuts the business of licensed professionals. More importantly, as in this case, there is potential for great consumer harm.”

“People don’t realize just how dangerous it is to buy cosmetic contact lenses without a prescription,” said Board of Optometry Executive Officer Mona Maggio. “If contacts aren’t fitted properly, they can cause serious eye damage and, in extreme cases, blindness and eye loss.”

The investigation began as the result of a complaint from a consumer, who alleged Sadeddin was selling and dispensing cosmetic contact lenses without a license. Thirty days after informing him that was against the law, the Board sent out a representative acting as a consumer who found the shop was still operating illegally. The Division of Investigation then conducted its sting operation and arrested Sadeddin.

Decorative contact lenses are especially popular among teens and young adults, and come in a variety of colors and styles. However, like corrective contact lenses, decorative contact lenses may only be obtained with a prescription written by a licensed optometrist or ophthalmologist.

Non-prescription contact lenses that are not properly fitted can cause problems with the eyelid, the conjunctiva, the various layers of the cornea, and even the tear film that covers the outer surface of the eye. There have been reported cases of serious corneal ulcers and infections leading to more serious internal ocular infections. Uncontrolled infection can lead to corneal scarring, vision impairment, and even blindness and eye loss.

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The Board of Optometry operates under the umbrella of the California Department of Consumer Affairs. Our mission is to serve the public and optometrists by promoting and enforcing laws and regulations which protect the health and safety of California's consumers and to ensure high quality care. Visit the Board's web site at www.optometry.ca.gov