

'Dr Death' to be extradited to Australia by Monday

Indian American surgeon Jayant Patel has been moved to a federal jail in Los Angeles on his way to Australia, where he faces numerous criminal charges, and his extradition is expected to be complete by Monday.

The transfer from Portland, Oregon to Los Angeles was made Wednesday or early Thursday with extraordinary secrecy. Federal officials overseeing Patel's extradition case said they were prohibited from discussing his movements, reported The Oregonian paper Friday.

Nicknamed 'Dr Death' by the Australian media, he faces charges for 16 offences, including manslaughter and fraud, relating to his employment as director of surgery at regional Bundaberg Base Hospital in Queensland between 2003 and 2005.

Patel, a US citizen, had June 26 voluntarily agreed to his extradition to stand trial in Australia.

Patel, who had been in the high-security Multnomah County Detention Centre in Portland since his arrest on March 11, was Tuesday handed over to US Marshals.

The Australian Associated Press (AAP) quoted Portland deputy sheriff Travis Gullberg as saying: 'He is out of our facility. He left sometime before 6 a.m. Tuesday with the US Marshals.'

The US marshal are expected to hand over Patel to two senior Queensland police officers, who will escort him to Brisbane on a commercial flight.

Beryl Crosby, spokeswoman for the Bundaberg Patients' Support Group, was quoted by AAP as saying that his former patients were very excited by the news and would attend his first court appearance.

Meanwhile, Patel's Brisbane-based solicitor Arun Raniga Wednesday told AAP that he came to know of Patel's movement from prison only through media reports.

'I've contacted his wife and she wasn't aware of it, so they're trying to find out what's really happening. I don't really know where it's at. Nobody knows where he is at the moment,' Raniga said.

Patel's legal team, led by barrister Michael Byrne, will be applying for bail at the earliest once he arrives in Brisbane and he is most likely to be taken directly to Brisbane Magistrates Court to be charged.

The 58-year-old doctor, if convicted in Queensland, will face a maximum life sentence.

In June, US District Court Judge Dennis Hubel had set a deadline for Australian and US authorities to extradite Patel by July 21. Earlier, Queensland Premier Anna Bligh had assured that Australian authorities would meet the extradition deadline set by the US Judge.

Patel, banned from surgery in two US states, was employed at the regional Bundaberg Base hospital for Australian \$200,000 (\$195,000) per annum in 2003. In late 2003, he was promoted to director of surgery at the hospital. On April 1, 2005, Patel's bosses signed on a \$3,547

business-class, one-way air fare for him to travel to the US, despite him being neck-deep in accusations of fatal incompetence.

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