KOCHVILLE TOWNSHIP, MI — Patients of Saginaw County neurologist Dr. Gavin Awerbuch gathered in front of his office on Bay Road in Kochville Township Saturday, May 17, for a vigil.

More than 30 people stood together in the parking lot at 5889 Bay. Some held signs that read "Stop the pain of injustice," and "Dr. Awerbuch is there for his patients," among other messages of support for the neurologist, who is under federal investigation on charges of health care fraud and distributing a controlled substance.

The physician was arraigned in federal court in Detroit on May 6.

The FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration and Internal Revenue Service say Awerbuch prescribed unneeded medication to patients, including the cancer pain-relieving drug Subsys, and billed Medicare and private insurers for medical tests he didn't conduct.

Awerbuch is free on a $10,000 bond and must appear in federal court at 1 p.m. Tuesday, May 27. The conditions of his bond state he cannot prescribe controlled substances, bill Medicare or other federal health care programs and must surrender his concealed pistol license and passport.

The FBI is coordinating the effort to return medical records to patients, said David Porter, FBI Detroit supervisory special agent. To contact the FBI Bay City office, visit 115 First in Bay City or call 989-892-6525.

Awerbuch's attorney, Detroit-based Mark Kriger, previously declined to comment on the investigation.

Related: 'People are going to be lost without Dr. Awerbuch,' patient says of Saginaw neurologist

Bonnie Poppe, 56, of Saginaw Township was among the group gathered Saturday afternoon.

"You gotta know the truth about him," said Poppe, a patient of Awerbuch for nearly 20 years. "He's compassionate. He believes when you tell him something. He believes in you."

She added, "(He) never, ever pushed pills of any sort of me. Never. In all these years, never."

Melissa Payne, 35, of Caro said she has been a patient for about a year. Her husband, Jack Payne, 45, has been a patient for about nine years.

"I think it's a bunch of bull. I think they're picking on him because he helps people out," she said. "We know he's not a fraud."

Payne said her husband takes pain medication, but he will not have to go without this month.

"I was, luckily, able to get his pain medication filled," she said. "I was able to get his pain medication for this month."

The Rev. Larry Camel, pastor of New Birth Missionary Baptist Church and Parishioners on Patrol, led a prayer. The group joined hands.
"They contacted us for help. We do prayer vigils," he said afterward. "I did pray for them. I'm not here to judge either side. I'm just here to help the people."

Patricia Fulco-Hall of Saginaw organized the vigil. She has been a patient of Awerbuch for about 25 years.

"I don't think they're right. I know they're not right," she said of the authorities and the investigation. "They should have stopped to think ... about how it would hurt people, and it has."

— Heather Jordan covers business for MLive/The Saginaw News/The Bay City Times. She can be reached at 989-450-2652 or hjordan@mlive.com. For more business news, follow her on Twitter and Facebook.
Supporters of Dr. Gavin Awerbuch hold vigil in Kochville Township

Tim Goessman | Mlive.com Mike Kubzak holds a sign in support of Dr. Gavin Awerbuch during a vigil on Bay, Saturday, May 17, 2014 in Kochville Township. Kubzak has been a patient of Awerbuch for eight years. Awerbuch, a Kochville Township neurologist, is under federal investigation on charges of distributing a controlled substance and health care fraud.

Supporters of Dr. Gavin Awerbuch hold vigil in Kochville Township

Tim Goessman | Mlive.com Steve Pace speaks during a vigil for Dr. Gavin Awerbuch at his office, Saturday, May 17, 2014 in Kochville Township. Awerbuch, a Kochville Township neurologist, is under federal investigation on charges of distributing a controlled substance and health care fraud.

Supporters of Dr. Gavin Awerbuch hold vigil in Kochville Township

Tim Goessman | Mlive.com Jack Payne holds a sign in support of Dr. Gavin Awerbuch during a vigil at his office, Saturday, May 17, 2014 in Kochville Township. "He’s the only man that showed me compassion," Payne said. Payne has been a patient of Awerbuch for nine years. Awerbuch, a Kochville Township neurologist, is under federal investigation on charges of distributing a controlled substance and health care fraud.

Supporters of Dr. Gavin Awerbuch hold vigil in Kochville Township

Tim Goessman | Mlive.com A supporter of Dr. Gavin Awerbuch wears a sticker during a vigil at his office.
in Kochville Township, Saturday, May 17, 2014. Awerbuch, a Kochville Township neurologist, is under federal investigation on charges of distributing a controlled substance and health care fraud.

Tim Goessman
Supporters of Dr. Gavin Awerbuch hold vigil in Kochville Township

Tim Goessman | Mlive.com Patricia Hall, left, and her husband David Hall, right, hold hands during a prayer in support of Dr. Gavin Awerbuch during a vigil at his office in Kochville Township, Saturday, May 17, 2014. Awerbuch, a Kochville Township neurologist, is under federal investigation on charges of distributing a controlled substance and health care fraud.

Kochville Township
Tim Goessman | Mlive.com Kathy Rifenbark, left, and her son, Devin Vansumeren, right, hold signs in support of Dr. Gavin Awerbuch during a vigil at his office, Saturday, May 17, 2014 in Kochville Township. Awerbuch, a Kochville Township neurologist, is under federal investigation on charges of distributing a controlled substance and health care fraud.