

Pa. abortion doc in court on ‘pill mill’ charges

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PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A Philadelphia abortion doctor facing murder charges in the deaths of seven babies and a patient has again pleaded not guilty to running a “pill mill” out of the clinic.

Kermit Gosnell entered the plea Thursday at his arraignment on a revised federal drug indictment.

Federal prosecutors allege he freely gave patients prescriptions for highly addictive painkillers from 2008 until a 2010 drug raid.

Gosnell, 71, faces trial next year in state court after pleading not guilty to the eight murder counts. A harrowing grand jury report charged that Gosnell, his wife and various untrained employees routinely performed illegal, late-term abortions amid filthy conditions at his Women’s Medical Center in west Philadelphia.

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Lawyers cannot comment because of a gag order in the case.

The federal charges allege that Gosnell made at least \$200,000 from the illicit drug distribution.

The April indictment charges that Gosnell — or his untrained staff — wrote as many as 2,300 prescriptions a month for OxyContin and other highly addictive, controlled drugs. The volume grew so high he set up a separate phone line just for refills, the indictment said.

Gosnell typically came to work only in the evenings to perform abortions after the women were medicated, so he was often not around when the prescriptions were filled, authorities said.

Staff members would give as many as 10 prescriptions under different names to the same customer, collecting a \$20 fee and a tip they kept for themselves, the indictment alleged. Three employees are also charged. The clinic has been shut down.

In the state case, authorities charge that Gosnell and his staff used scissors to kill seven viable babies born alive, and caused the drug-overdose death of a 41-year-old refugee who went to the clinic for an abortion. Authorities called the clinic a “house of horrors.”

Several former staff members have pleaded guilty to third-degree murder and are expected to testify in the state case against Gosnell, who faces the death penalty if convicted. His wife, Pearl, pleaded guilty to performing an illegal, late-term abortion and other charges, but has the legal right not to testify against her husband.